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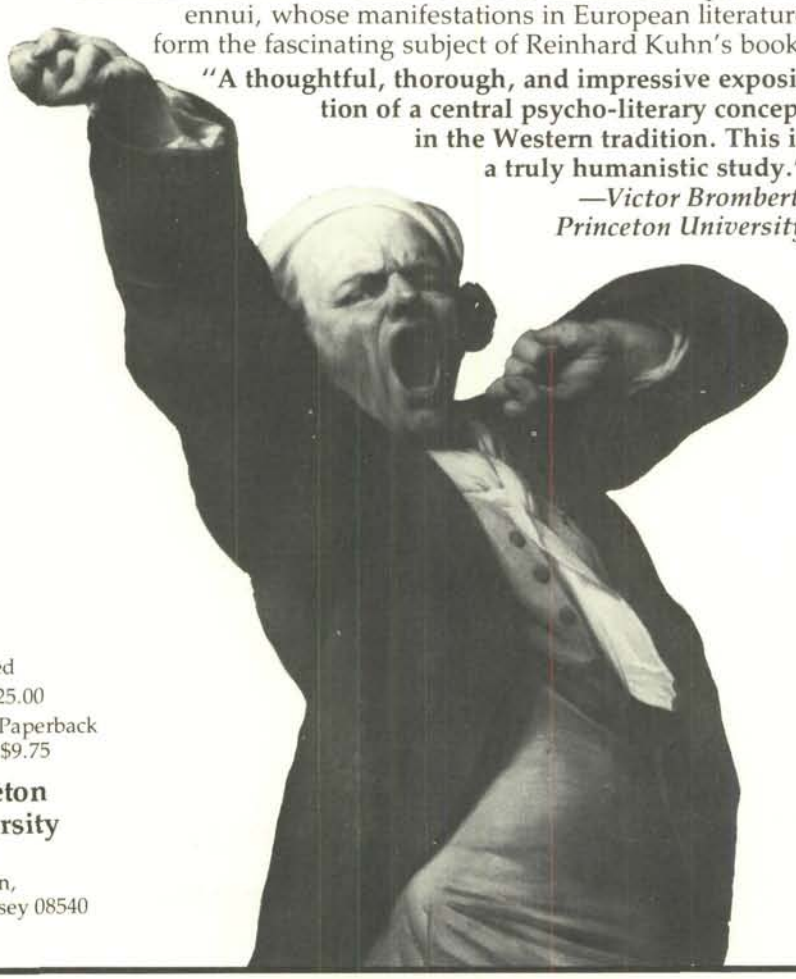

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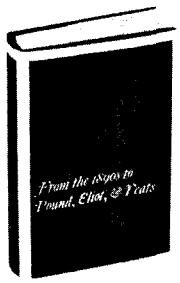

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The Despairing Optimist . . . . . .

RENÉ DUBOS

Most of us are schizoid when it comes to our attitudes about environmental quality.

On the one hand, we extol the virtues of the wilderness and want to preserve it intact, for its own sake. The condors, the redwoods, the Far West canyons, the tropical rain forest and frozen tundras, the marine estuaries and other forms of wetlands, the wildlife of the African savanna and of the Asian jungle, the whales, the porpoises, and the multifarious fauna and flora of the oceans may or may not be of any use to us, but this is irrelevant. We fight on their behalf because we believe in their right to existence, even independently of us.

On the other hand, we resent any change in the environmental heritage, even though this environment was created out of the wilderness by human activities. We want to protect the farmlands of New England, the hedgerows of East Anglia and of the European bocage, the canal systems that artificially link natural bodies of water, the straight rows of trees that were once planted in linear patterns, the villages and monuments that were erected at the cost of much environmental destruction. We struggle to save these human creations of the past, conveniently forgetting that all of them meant areas deforested, swamps drained, hillsides gouged of their stones and sand.

The environmental movement is condemned to ambivalence because it wants to save both the wilderness and what human beings have created and continue to create by destroying the wilderness.

This schizoid attitude concerning environmental quality is apparent in the writings of even the most dedicated ecologists and nature lovers. In his celebrated essay "A Sand County Almanac," Aldo Leopold asserted that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." Leopold called this attitude toward the environment "a land ethic," and this ethic has become the holy creed of conservation philosophy. It implies that Nature knows best and that the better part of wisdom is therefore to interfere as little as possible with natural processes.

In reality, a land ethic formulated in such narrow terms constitutes but an incomplete statement of the relationship between humankind and the earth. Biotic communities as they exist in the wilderness are not necessarily the most satisfactory ones and there is good reason, indeed, to believe that many of them have been improved by human intervention. Leopold himself was clearly aware of this fact. In *A Sand County Almanac* he described ecosystems that obviously he considered highly desirable, yet that had been profoundly transformed by deliberate or accidental human activities. He mentioned, for example, that the Kentucky bluegrass ecosystem had progressively acquired its characteristic flora after the sugarcane lands (themselves of human inception) had been "subjected to the particular mixture of forces represented by the cow, plow, fire and axe of the pioneer. . . . We do not even know where the bluegrass came from—whether it is a native species, or a stowaway from Europe."

The lesson Leopold derived from his studies of human interventions into nature—both the destructive ones and the creative ones—is

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RENÉ DUBOS is professor emeritus at the Rockefeller University. His newest book, *The Professor, the Institute, and DNA*, is about Oswald T. Avery's life and scientific achievements.

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that the goal is not the maintenance of wilderness, but rather the establishment of a state of harmony between humankind and natural forces.

I, also, am of two minds when I ponder the effects of human intervention into natural processes. On the one hand, I suffer from seeing the wounds on the surface of the earth resulting from human assaults—the deserts that have been created by overgrazing or poor agricultural management, the denuded mountain slopes that have lost their soil following deforestation and erosion, the bodies of water polluted by industrial and domestic effluents, the natural habitats so grossly altered that countless animal and plant species are threatened with extinction.

On the other hand, I marvel at the new environmental values created out of the wilderness by the human presence. On the American continent, the fires set by the preagricultural Indians to check the growth of trees favored the multiplication of buffaloes, of prairie dogs, and of other animals, and thus indirectly brought about the development of the unique prairie vegetation. With its balanced system of tall grasses and wild flowers, the prairie eventually accumulated black sod more than ten feet deep in places. Similarly in thirteenth-century England, the large-scale sheep grazing cropped the grass to a lawnlike texture—stimulating at the same time the growth of rockrose, wild thyme, scabious, and other wild flowers that make the Sussex Downs smell, in the words of Rudyard Kipling, "like dawn in paradise." Much of the charm and ecological diversity of what we call nature thus depends in reality upon processes generated by human activities.

The creative effects of the human presence on the quality of the environment are even more obvious, of course, in the phenomenal and endearing diversity of human habitats—the coziness of the Vermont villages nestled in their valleys, the picturesque character of the Tuscany hill towns, the *perspectives infinies* of the French classical parks, the sanctity of gardens surrounding the Japanese temples and shrines, where the precise place of each stone, and the gardener's thoughtful pruning of trees set in their mossy beds, seem to reveal nature's intentions as brought out by human intercession. Human beings do not merely work with nature; in many places they have entered into a symbiosis with the earth.

Until our time, the evolution of civilized life has entailed (almost everywhere) the clearing of forests and the draining of swamps. The European landscape as we know it today was progressively created out of the wilderness by the *grands défrichements* that began in the Neolithic period, accelerated during the Middle Ages, and were essentially completed by the end of the eighteenth century. In the United States, the ax of the woodsman and the plow that "broke the plains" were the agencies that created the best farmland out of the wilderness during the nineteenth century. All over the world, wherever possible and economically profitable, forests were felled, marshes drained, estuaries filled, and the topography sculpted, in the belief that these transformations meant "upgrading" the land.

It has become increasingly apparent during the past few decades, however, that this belief was often unjustified because the short-term benefits achieved by upgrading the land commonly implied a disastrous long-range environmental degradation. The sense of humility that is at the beginning of environmental wisdom began barely two hundred years ago.

From the worship of nature by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romantics, to the quantitative studies of energy-flow through the global systems by modern ecologists, many influences have alerted human beings to the dangers of altering the environment in the hope of improving it. This awareness has grown in part from the knowledge that history is replete with ecological disasters of human origin and that the scars on the earth can persist for hundreds and even thousands of years. Awareness of dangers has been sharpened by ecological studies demonstrating that human activities in one particular region can have disastrous effects on the ecological health of other parts of the globe, indeed of the globe as a whole.

The management of wetlands provides a striking example of change in public attitude toward the upgrading of natural areas. Until recently, swamps, marshes, and shallow estuaries were regarded as messy and of no use

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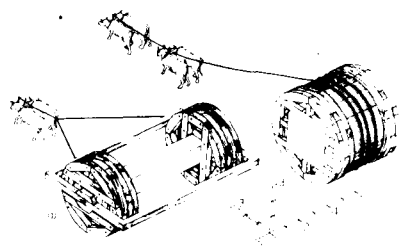

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except as convenient places to dump trash and as habitats for a few species of game birds. Furthermore, wetlands were considered dangerous because they served as hatcheries of mosquitoes and other nasty insects. It seemed good sense, therefore, to drain or fill them as rapidly as possible—in other words, to upgrade them—thereby creating agricultural land or real estate developments. By 1970, in fact, almost half of the original 127 million acres of wetlands in the United States had been transformed and improved—or so one thought.

Environmentalists have shown, however, that wetlands have an enormous value in their unaltered state—not only in aesthetic and ecologic terms, but also in economic returns. For example, marshes and estuaries are rich in inorganic and organic matter that supports the life of an enormous variety of animals, plants, and especially microscopic organisms. Directly or indirectly, some two-thirds of the world's commercial fish harvest depends on forms of life originating in shallow marine estuaries. Another value of wetlands is their ability to act as a natural flood control system, which slows and regulates the downstream flow of water. Finally, the various forms of life in wetlands decompose organic matter, thus acting, free of charge, as sewage treatment systems that purify polluted waters through natural mechanisms.

The multiple functions of wetlands in the ecology of the globe make it possible to calculate that their economic value is equivalent to an annual income of many thousands of dollars per acre—in other words, commonly a much greater value than that of the so-called improved land that could be created from them. This value is now so well recognized that steps are being taken against the filling or channeling of wetlands.

A few years ago, for example, the Army was compelled by the local courts to reestablish a swamp located along the Hudson River in Peekskill, New York, that it had converted into a parking lot for military vehicles. The court even dictated that the rehabilitation of the swamp should include the re-creation of the biota that was present in the original swamp. More recently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prevented a major Florida real estate corporation from converting two thousand acres of coastal mangrove swamp into a housing development, even though the corporation had already sold much of the acreage to prospective home buyers.

Deforestation, as already mentioned, has always been a feature of civilization. Until recently, official measures against the clearing of forests have been based on fears of timber shortage, on the dangers of erosion, and on aesthetic or emotional considerations, as in the case of the redwoods. New scientific knowledge now makes it apparent that large-scale deforestation can have disastrous global effects.

Because of its richness and immensity, the tropical rain forest utilizes a very large percentage of the global carbon dioxide. Its destruction, whether in the Amazon valley or in Central Africa, would therefore probably raise the carbon dioxide level of the global atmosphere and this in turn would have a variety of dangerous consequences—including an increase in global temperature through the so-called greenhouse effect.

Thus forests, like wetlands and other components of the wilderness, influence the flow of energy and materials throughout the globe and thereby influence the quality of life and of the environment in places far removed from those of the initial effect.

Persons concerned with the quality of the environment have many valid reasons for emphasizing the urgency of preventing further deforestation, but paradoxically many of these same persons are disturbed when trees invade open land in the regions where they live.

In several parts of the world, large areas of productive farmland are being lost to urban growth, highway construction, and industrial development. Contrary to general belief, however, the loss of farmland along the Eastern Seaboard of the United States is due much less to urbanization and industrialization than to the abandonment of agriculture. According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture, farming occupied more than two-thirds of the land areas of the state of Massachusetts by the time of the Civil War. In contrast, the acreage in farms of all kinds had decreased to 42 percent in 1935 and to 13.5 percent in 1974. In Rhode Island, both the

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percentage of land used for farming in the early days and the subsequent decrease in land under cultivation are comparable to the situation in Massachusetts. A similar trend can be recognized in other states of the Atlantic Seaboard. Farmland is also being lost in certain countries, such as Sweden and France, not because of a decrease in fertility, but because farming is no longer an economically profitable occupation in the marginal farms of industrialized countries.

Much of the American and European farmland that is being abandoned was forested before it was used for agriculture, and a new growth of trees spontaneously develops on it as soon as farming is abandoned—unless, of course, the land is put to some other use. Even though Massachusetts is one of the most densely populated states, paradoxically it has now also become one of the most heavily forested. In view of the widespread concern about the global consequences of deforestation, one might believe that the spontaneous return of the trees on abandoned farmland would cause satisfaction among environmentalists, but this is not always the case. Our schizoid attitude toward the environment is expressed by our desire to preserve the forest where it still exists, although we object to its return in the areas where it has been cleared in the past by human intervention.

One obvious reason for objecting to the return of trees is that their presence would make it more difficult and costly to reopen the land for agriculture, if this became desirable. As their population increases, the great food-producing states, California in particular, may eventually consume most of what they produce, and will therefore have little food to export, except at very high prices. Furthermore, the fear of labor conflicts and of petroleum shortages makes it dangerous for the northeastern states to depend exclusively on distant sources of food. For these reasons, the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York have begun to explore means for preventing further deterioration of their agricultural economies. New policies of land-use regulation and special tax incentives for the preservation of farmland are among the measures being considered by many communities to prevent the forest from reestablishing itself in areas, cleared for agriculture centuries ago, that might be used for food production in the future.

Concern for food shortage is, however, probably less influential than are aesthetic and emotional considerations in the movement against spontaneous reforestation of abandoned farmland. Whatever people may say about their love of the wilderness and of the primeval forest, most of them enjoy the visual and other sensuous qualities of open farmland. For the poet and the painter, and for the dedicated hiker as well, allusions to nature commonly refer to humanized rural landscapes rather than to the primeval forest or other forms of wilderness. The general feeling is that nature undergoes degradation whenever farmland is being invaded by brush and trees—even though nature is then simply returning to its original state.

Industrial societies are only now beginning to realize that one of the most valuable by-products of traditional agriculture in the temperate zone has been the creation of appealing landscapes that are widely loved and are the source of inspiration for writers and painters. A time may come when farmers will have to be subsidized if we want them to continue to provide not only crops of economic value but also such spectacles as cattle pasturing in a Vermont meadow, hedges fluttering with songbirds, and other bucolic scenes that we mistakenly regard as manifestations of undisturbed nature.

It is obvious, of course, that untamed nature also has had many devotees, especially since the eighteenth century, but its cult has been easier to preach than to practice. Aldous Huxley expressed the ambivalent feeling of civilized people, and, perhaps even more, of primitive people toward the wilderness in his essay "Wordsworth in the Tropics": "To us who live beneath a temperate sky and in the age of Henry Ford, the worship of Nature comes almost naturally. It is easy to love a feeble and already conquered enemy. . . . There are (still) wildwoods and mountains, marshes and heaths, even in England. But they are there only on sufferance, because we have chosen, out of our good pleasure, to leave them their freedom." Joseph Wood Krutch, who wrote so lovingly and beautifully about nature in this column, also had reservations about his contacts with

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the wilderness in the part of Arizona where he had retired. He admitted experiencing in the desert "something like terror. . . . We may look at it as we look at the moon, but we feel rejected. It is neither for us nor for our kind." Through the ages, humankind has felt ill at ease in most forms of the wilderness.

There are good biological reasons for our emotional attachment to humanized rural landscapes. Even though the human species has spread over the whole surface of the earth, it is *biologically* out of place in most of the climatic and topographic zones where it has settled. Its low degree of adaptability is due to the fact that it has retained the genetic equipment it acquired during the early Stone Age in the savannas where it emerged—open land with masses of trees here and there but also with wide vistas that had much in common with the rural landscapes idealized in poetry and painting, and of which many people dream.

Since most humans are not biologically adapted to the natural environment in which they live, they can survive and function in them only by resorting to a great variety of *social* adaptations. They must modify their natural environments to create out of them artificial ecosystems adapted to their fundamental biological needs.

Many biological and mental aspects of our nature are still linked to the wilderness. The persistence and the health of the wilderness is probably as essential to our sanity as it is to the maintenance of the global ecosystems on which our lives depend. Yet there is no escape from the fact that, wherever we settle, we have to transform nature so as to adapt it to our unchangeable physiological and psychological needs. Our schizoid attitude concerning environmental quality is the consequence of the fact that, while our species emerged from the wilderness and is still interwoven with it, the life of *Homo sapiens* implies the humanization of the earth.

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Life and Letters

It's So Hard to Be Good Under Capitalism

ARISTIDES

My title comes from a line of dialogue in a 1930s Gold Diggers movie. A beautiful blonde is in cahoots with an unscrupulous heir who fears that his aged uncle will change his will, which is now in his favor. She agrees, for a high fee, to show the old gent a high time—so high, in fact, that he is sure to kill himself through exhaustion. Their compact made, the blonde and the heir part, but not before the blonde, turning back to face the camera, remarks, "Gee, it's so hard to be good under capitalism." All else about the movie has fled from my memory, but that line remains, and I have often used it to mark events of personal indulgence. When I allow myself a second dessert, say, or pay for a necktie what I used to pay for two shirts, or write a fifteen-dollar check for a pocket-sized used book of 125 pages (Rebecca West's little study of Henry James), I fall back on that line: "It's so hard to be good under capitalism."

Because I do not even know the title of the movie in which this delightful line occurs, I do not know the name of the screenwriter. Since the movie was made in the 1930s, a time when Hollywood was clamorous with Communists and fellow travelers, I wonder whether the line was written by a left-winger or by someone reacting to the left-wing orthodoxy of the Hollywood screenwriters of that day. But left-winger or right, he was a most witty fellow, and I remain grateful to him.

Not everyone, of course, would find the line witty. Many people, intellectuals prominent among them, believe it quite literally. I recently read two as yet unpublished essays by a historian whose prime assumption, and whose message, were that it's so hard to be good under capitalism. I won't summarize the essays, but if one were to do a literary criticism of them, treating them as if they were short stories, it would run something like this:

The villain of both stories is capitalism. The population in which they are set is known as "the consumer society," of which we are all members (excepting, perhaps, the author and those who agree with him). Assailed by temptation, we, as members of the consumer society, are gulled and guyed by advertising. We are the villain's creatures, utterly imprisoned by forces outside ourselves, signed, sealed, and delivered to the marketplace, there to consume fresh products, adapt to predetermined patterns of behavior, and somnambulistically live out our days. The problem in these stories is the problem of work, which has been degraded. Exactly when it was less degrading for the mass of men is a question the author does not deal with; neither does he suggest another form of economic organization to replace capitalism. These matters are outside the realm of his responsibility, as he sees it. Nor does he himself appear to have much of a problem with work. His job is to tell us, over and over again, that it's so hard to be good under capitalism. For doing this he finds full and profitable and (one gathers) satisfactory employment.

The chief defect of such writing is that it does not portray a world that even begins to approach a plausible complexity. Yet it does not appear to put off many people who have a taste for this sort of thinking. "Human kind," T. S. Eliot wrote in "Burnt Norton," "cannot bear very much reality." Yet, one wonders, isn't it complexity, the cousin to reality, that cannot be borne? How splendid it would be if the "it's so hard to be good under capitalism" critique were absolutely true. If it were, we need only shift certain institutional arrange-

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ments and the game would be won. Nationalize steel, and then lovemaking would be made better everywhere. Remove advertising, and the quality of art would soon rise. Abolish private property, and . . . well, listen to Oscar Wilde, in "The Soul of Man Under Socialism":

> It will be a marvellous thing—the true personality of man—when we see it. It will grow naturally and simply, flower-like, or as a tree grows. It will not be at discord. It will never argue or dispute. It will not prove things. It will know everything. And yet it will not busy itself about knowledge. It will have wisdom. Its value will not be measured by material things. It will have nothing. And yet it will have everything, and whatever one takes from it, it will still have, so rich will it be. It will not always be meddling with others, or asking them to be like itself. It will love them because they will be different. And yet while it will not meddle with others it will help all, as a beautiful thing helps us, by being what it is. The personality of man will be very wonderful. It will be as wonderful as the personality of a child.

Odd, is it not, that when even so floridly witty a man as Oscar Wilde attempts to imagine the soul of man under socialism the best he can come up with is a secular equivalent of a fundamentalist's idea of heaven—a heaven, moreover, of the kind that caused Mark Twain to remark that, from all he had heard about both places, it was heaven for climate but hell for conversation.

Is it, then, socialism for climate, capitalism for conversation? Perhaps it is closer to the truth to say that it is either for neither. On this greatly divisive subject I have always been impressed with the wisdom of a Polish proverb that runs: "Under capitalism, man exploits man; under socialism, vice versa." Yet mine obviously is not, at least among intellectuals, the dominant view. The "it's so hard to be good under capitalism" plaints keep pouring forth, many of them astonishingly elaborate and many financed with money earned by those capitalist jackals, Meyer Guggenheim, Henry Ford, and John D. Rockefeller.

What is the source of these unrelenting attacks upon capitalism? Although capitalism is never without its harshness, it cannot fairly be argued that it has grown even more harsh in recent decades. A stronger argument can be made for the reverse case that holds capitalism (for which read: Big Business) to be nowadays on the defensive, if not altogether on the run—being chased by government and intellectuals of the Ralph Nader and J. K. Galbraith type. Do the attacks on capitalism grow more strident because life is qualitatively worse now than before, despite all efforts at ameliorating human misery? Or is something else involved?

Despite an avalanche of evidence against it, the "it's so hard to be good under capitalism" line persists—and indeed grows greater in the number of its adherents, and more emboldened in its confidence. Joseph Schumpeter, in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, predicted much of this as early as 1942. An economist by training, an expert on business cycles, and a historian of economic change, Schumpeter was a social theorist whose prose knew no tincture of doubt. "Perhaps the most striking feature of the picture," he wrote in describing what he felt to be the decomposition of capitalism, "is the extent to which the modern bourgeoisie, besides educating its own enemies, allows itself in turn to be educated by them. It absorbs the slogans of current radicalism and seems quite willing to undergo a process of conversion hostile to its very existence."

In support of Schumpeter it must be said that there has been an often-unacknowledged attack on capitalism in universities for some decades now. This attack has been carried on in the social sciences but even more openly in the teaching of literature. As a sometime teacher of literature, I have discovered myself joining in. Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*, for example, has a discrepancy in quality between the lyrical and nearly flawless first half of the book and the patchy second half, with its local chamber of commerce tone. I explain this by remarking that Twain had padded out his book so it would be long enough to sell by subscription. As for the unevenness of tone, I account for this by saying that Mark Twain was himself greatly riven in his feelings about business. He had married the daughter of a small-time plutocrat; he now lived among big-time plutocrats (the Rockefeller lieutenant H. H. Rogers was the man who dug Twain out of the deep financial hole in which he had buried himself); and over the course of his career expended perhaps more mental effort on his business ven-

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tures than on his writing. When I am done, my moral is unmistakable: business is the enemy of art.

But, as I feel forced to tell my class, there is a problem with all this: the message I have just delivered to them has been delivered in a room of a private university built and paid for by this selfsame enemy of art: business. Business, too, however indirectly, pays my salary at the university. And unless you, as students, are all the sons and daughters of poets, sculptors, professional revolutionaries, or college teachers, it is your parents' business that has made it possible, through tuition, for you to be here to learn that business is the enemy of art. This, I tell my class, is what no less a figure than Karl Marx would call an "objective contradiction." With a glance at my wristwatch, I remark further that I cannot resolve this contradiction, adding that it is for each of us to worry about on his own—yet, at a minimum, remaining aware that the contradiction does exist. Saved, as we say in boxing and pedagogy, by the bell.

Not that business, or capitalism, is inevitably the enemy of art. Dickens and Balzac, to name but two giants, are novelists who flourished under capitalism, while serving at the same time as critics of it, and whose careers would be quite unthinkable under any other other system. The idea that capitalism is the enemy of art is a modern idea, or, more specifically, an idea advanced by modernism under the label of "the wasteland." Touches of the argument against capitalism crop up before modernism. Oscar Wilde begins his famous essay, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," by announcing that "*the proper aim is to try and reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible*"; but then he ends up wanting a socialism of sorts because he thinks it best suited to artists: "*The form of government that is most suitable to the artist is no government at all.*" Here one might add that the only interesting art created under socialism has been that art created in strong reaction to it: the art of Solzhenitsyn, of Sinyavsky, of Akhmatova, and of Osip Mandelstam. Yet in the United States the view that business and art are implacably opposed seems to have won the day. Theodore Dreiser was the last important American novelist to take the drama of capitalism as his subject. Since Dreiser, the working assumption has been that business is wholly a destructive force; and Dreiser himself became a Communist. Our fiction has not been better for this assumption.

But art, its creation and quality, was never the reigning issue in the argument against capitalism. (As resilient as perhaps any human activity, art has a most impressive record of being done under every possible form of government, including the most strict censorship.) The reigning issue has been human misery and the need for social justice. For all of Karl Marx's insights, he is nowhere more potent, or appealing, than when describing the horrors of the working day under nineteenth-century industrial capitalism. Capitalism was viewed as a state of unceasing economic war; its victims were the workers, those who had nothing to lose but their fetters, for whom sympathy was reserved, and on whose behalf the argument against capitalism was staged.

But it was not only Marx and the men of the Left who had contumacious things to say about capitalism. In some respects the criticism of capitalism by conservatives has been far more devastating. Tocqueville referred to the "manufacturing aristocracy" thrown up by capitalism in America as a "monstrosity within the general social condition," and deplored it because, among other things, "when it has impoverished and brutalized the men it uses, [it] abandons them in time of crisis to public charity to feed them." H. L. Mencken, a writer altogether unsympathetic to Marxism in any form, nonetheless had no greater sympathy for the capitalist plutocracy, which he cited as at "the interior decorator and country club stage of culture." Peregrine Worsthorne, the conservative English writer, has recently praised the old-line British ruling class because "throughout the rough years of British capitalism, . . . the distinctively inhuman or impersonal characteristics of that type of economic organization were never allowed entirely to supersede the gentlemanly tradition of human relations or the paternalistic concept of *noblesse oblige*." Irving Kristol, one of the principal editors of *The Public Interest,* lecturing to an assemblage of corporation executives in Pittsburgh on the occasion of the two hundredth anniversary of the publication of *The Wealth of Nations,* told his audience that if Adam Smith had foreseen the modern

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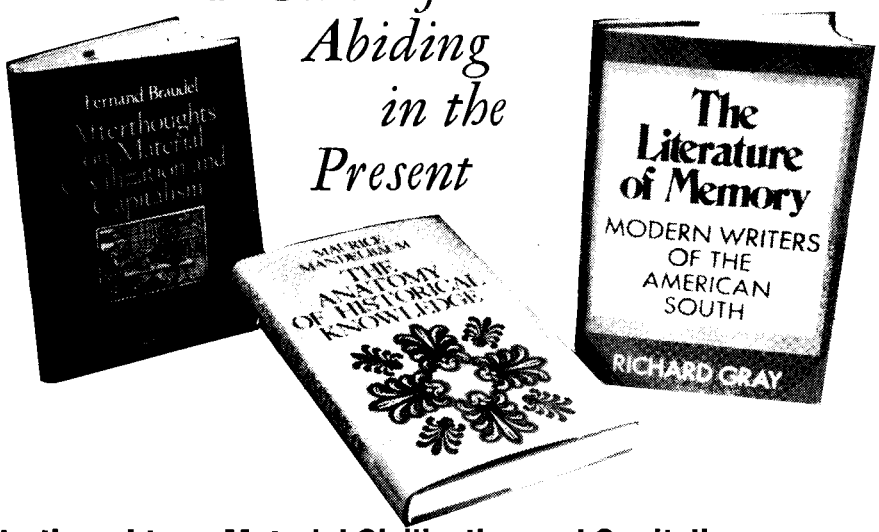

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stockholder-owned, professionally managed corporation, "he would have disliked it intensely."

There is much to be said against capitalism, but one wonders if it hasn't already been said—and said and said again and again. The bill of complaint has long been familiar. Capitalism creates social injustice. Capitalism is unregarding of the public weal. Capitalism is permissive about corruption. Capitalism has no respect for tradition. Capitalism has no vision beyond that of profit. Capitalism dehumanizes. Capitalism buys us off by satisfying low-grade temptations. It is, in short, so hard to be good under capitalism. This is the received wisdom, and almost all of us, at one time or another, have been at home to receive it.

Yet paradoxes abound in all this. Capitalism happens to have built the great private universities and museums in this country. Much of the architecture, old and new, now so greatly admired was built by capitalism. Capitalism has made possible unprecedented social mobility. The thirst for the products of capitalism seems unslaked, especially in those who have not had them. In an essay entitled "The Capitalist Paradox," Lewis H. Lapham has put the mixed case for and against capitalism most neatly:

> On the one hand the capitalist system implies the exploitation of any available weakness, but on the other hand it encourages the freedom of thought and experiment. The two genies emerge from the same bottle, simultaneously and without benefit of ideology. In November of last year, in the same week that the usual number of public officials were rounded up on the usual suspicions of fraud, seven Americans received the Nobel Prize.

Seven Nobel prizes versus (let us say) seven corrupt officials—now here is what might be called an interesting trade-off. Yet it is a trade-off that favors capitalism because, while corruption under capitalism has been irregular, creativity under it has been constant. Weighing the balance, there is the additional point that socialism's record has been almost unrelievedly bleak, whether under totalitarian or democratic governments. In the Soviet Union or in China, in England or in Sweden, socialism, long assumed to be the wave of the future, has brought both (at worst) vicious injustice and (at best) social and economic retardation. Enough evidence is now in to say that we have seen the future and it does not work.

This is not to say that capitalism works so wondrously well; it hasn't, doesn't, probably never will, being an exceedingly imperfect instrument. But even its imperfections have limitations, and conversation about it would be enormously improved if the limits of capitalism's imperfections were more clearly understood. (These imperfections might also be ameliorated more effectively.) Many people, of course, have no wish to understand these limits, having too heavy an emotional and intellectual investment in complete castigation of things as they stand. Such people have found in capitalism a splendid all-purpose whipping boy.

Yet a new twist has now been added. Earlier opponents of capitalism were moved to oppose it by their hunger for social justice; more recent opponents of capitalism are moved to their opposition by a need for explanation. The former hated capitalism for its ravages upon the working classes, or the poor; the latter hate capitalism for what they take to be its ravages upon the middle class, or themselves. Thus it is not the failure of capitalism, but its success, that is often attacked. In the attempt to demonstrate that every silver lining has its cloud, the recent opponents of capitalism bewail the shattering effects of affluence. Rather old-fashionedly, they simultaneously bemoan the vulgarity of advertising while crediting its effectiveness, assuming not only that advertising is everywhere effective but that they alone have the refinement to spot its vulgarity. Conspiracy is discovered everywhere. Government is behind business, in their view, and business is behind government. A stable government and a prosperous business, although we have seldom had both together in recent decades, are the best evidence of a national swindle.

In the new opposition to capitalism very little mention is made of the class struggle. "Vulgar Marxism" such talk is now felt to be, and hence clearly infra dig. In Richard Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man*, a recent example of current criticism of capitalism, its author openly disdains trundling out "all the familiar catastrophic clichés—alienation, dissociation, etc. . . ." The thesis of Professor

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Sennett's book, a work supported by the Guggenheim and Ford foundations, is that "the blatant signs of an unbalanced personal life and empty public life have been a long time in the making. They are the result of a change that began with the fall of the *ancien régime* and the formation of a new capitalist, secular, urban culture." Such is its thesis, but its message is a familiar one: it's so hard to be good under capitalism.

Books of this kind are "essential reading," remarked a *New Statesman* reviewer of *The Fall of Public Man*, but "they are hell to read." What he meant are those books that are part history, part psychoanalysis, part literary criticism, part anthropology, and part politics, but go by the name of sociology. Versatility is admirable but there is, or ought to be, a distinction between it and a scatter-gun. Professor Sennett calls his book a "dialectical inquiry," thus bringing to the word dialectical the fresh meaning of "ill organized." He disdains Marxist clichés but then fills his own pages with such clichés as "meaningful," "structure," and that old standby, the "Protestant Ethic." Worse, he builds theory on what turn out to be historical inaccuracies—some quite decisive ones, as J. H. Plumb has noted in the *New York Times Book Review*, and others of a lesser kind that one notes on one's own, such as attributing Coleridge's phrase "the willing suspension of disbelief" to Aristotle. Apparently it is difficult not only to be good but to be accurate under capitalism.

But setting all this aside, what Professor Sennett is saying is that before the onset of industrial capitalism life was better—public life chiefly but also private life—and that the two, public and private, were held in better equilibrium then than now. From the advent of the department store, to the need to supply program notes to concert audiences, to sexual repression, to the emergence of empty public personalities, to the hunger for intimacy, Professor Sennett views life every day in every way as getting worse and worse. Valéry once remarked that even the future isn't what it used to be—a proposition with which Professor Sennett would agree—but in his pages neither is the past, which he views as much better than most of us have thought it. He dates the fall of man, the departure from the Garden, from the rise of industrial capitalism, although it could be argued that much of what he blames on it could as easily be laid to the rise of democracy. But because, for all his intellectual garrulity, Professor Sennett does not descend to talk about economic organization or exploitation, he is unpersuasive both in his attack on capitalism and in his glorification of what came before. Not wishing to lapse into vulgar Marxism, he alludes, vaguely, to "larger historical forces," but the true object of his contempt, nearly lost in the labyrinth of his psycho-sociological explanations, is the bourgeoisie, which is held responsible for everything but earthquakes.

In works such as *The Fall of Public Man*, capitalism is like snake oil in reverse: instead of curing, it causes every illness. Reading such books, one's first impulse is to rush to the defense of the poor beast's reputation. Doing so is not, I think, a case of saying whatever is is right. Rather it is a case of wanting more accurately to get at what is truly wrong, which such scatter-shot criticisms as Professor Sennett's do not allow one to do. George Santayana, no radical, remarked of modern capitalism that "inventions and organization which ought to have increased leisure, by producing the necessaries with little labor, have only increased the population, degraded labor, and diffused luxury." That criticism still stands; the problems it poses remain unsolved. Further caterwauling about how difficult it is to be good under capitalism does not bring the solutions any closer.

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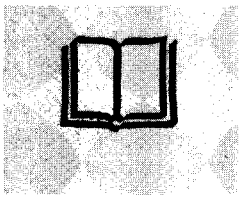

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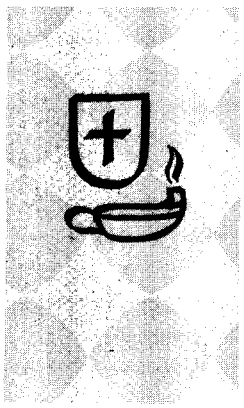

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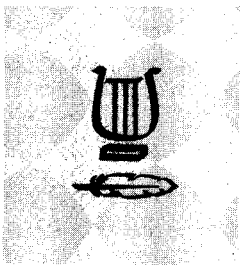

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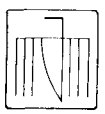

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Living in a Valley

OSCAR HANDLIN

PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE MOUNTAINS view landscapes different from those exposed to the people of the plains.

The statement is simple. Perhaps it seems unexceptionable to the point of being commonplace. Yet its implications deserve exploration—they have much to say to the historian.

The contrast made a deep impression upon me because I came to the mountains after having spent my childhood and youth entirely in the plains.

When I now think of the plains, my thoughts run first to the rural prairies—the long stretches of open fields of the American Middle West, the Russian steppes, or the Low Countries. And yet none partook more of the quality of the plains than the section of urban Brooklyn in which I grew up.

The area was level. The real estate developers who had filled in the swamps just before the First World War had packed the land down, aiming for, and attaining, the absolute in flatness. Furthermore, they had imposed upon their tracts an immense rectilinear grid that crushed all sense of variety in the landscape. Long, straight lines extended rigidly off into the indefinite distance. Position on that grid defined the place. We belonged to 62nd Street and 20th Avenue. That intersection was the center of our neighborhood. From it the rows of houses, much alike, crisscrossed away at right angles for ever and ever. Beyond 62nd lay 63rd, then 64th, and so on, for all we knew to infinity.

When I grew somewhat older, I explored. I walked west, beyond 65th and 66th, number after number, then got to 86th Street and discovered the bay at its farther edge. And across the bay, I knew, was Staten Island, where, no doubt, the numbers continued on in their own way indefinitely.

Only in that direction did my explorations reach a satisfactory conclusion. I once tried going north, up from 20th to about 8th Avenue—into a region of Italian kids so tough that even I beat a cautious retreat.

OSCAR HANDLIN, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor at Harvard University, is the author of many historical works. This essay was originally given as the Kenneth B. Murdock Memorial Lecture at Leverett House, Harvard University.

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To the east the forbidding barriers of Washington Cemetery and to the south a baffling maze of parkways frustrated boyish efforts at discovery. But then it was characteristic that very few of my neighbors, young or old, knew much about the alien spaces bordering upon the neighborhood. Their travel did not take the lateral form that would have revealed the configuration of the territory. Daily they left home for work or school, great distances away; but they moved by the subway, which obscured both topography and people. A voyage through dark tunnels that began with a descent down one hole and terminated with an ascent up another, miles away, left no sense whatever of what intervened.

With such initial impressions of space I blundered innocently into another world. My first encounters with the mountains were consequently shocking and disturbing, for they exposed me not only to a novel set of sights, but also to modes of thinking totally different from my own.

In the mountains, aphorisms coined on the plains become either irrelevant or false. The wisdom of the one place does not apply to the other. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west—a truism. But in the mountains the first light glistens off the western peaks, and only later does the ball of fire appear in the east. At dusk, the eastern summits still gleam while shadows cover those in the west. A straight line is the shortest distance between two points—in the plains, not in the mountains. Whoever has viewed the way in which paths switch back and forth up the slopes, or snake around natural obstacles, will understand why linear measurements have little meaning here. Indeed, away from the plains I lose altogether the habit of calculating distance in blocks, meters, or miles; the gauge of hours and minutes is far more significant.

So too nomenclature in the mountains follows distinctive rules, different from those of the plains. Not that the terms up there are necessarily more specific. On the contrary, some words are maddeningly vague and inclusive. The word *alp*, for instance, refers to the whole chain of mountains that extends from France across to Austria. On the other hand, it can also refer to a high-altitude meadow or field. But still again, it can refer to a building in that field. The word would thus seem to lack precise definition. But as understood by the mountain people it does have a clear meaning, derived from its relationship to a whole function that is an important part of their way of life. While undifferentiated in the sense required by plainsmen for whom a place is a place is a place, the word has clear enough connotations for those familiar with the animal husbandry of the mountains.

By contrast, other words have a particularity far beyond that to which the people of the plains are accustomed. Down below, the word *meadow* has a broad, inclusive meaning. And in some cases, no doubt, the people

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of the mountains also use it in a general way. They will, for instance, write *Wiesen* on signs posted to warn the tourist away from the growing grasses they will harvest into hay. But among themselves, the mountain people use a much greater number of words; not only *alp*, as we have just noted, but also *Au, Rüti, Schwendi, Sass, Trift, Boden, Heuberge, Maienfeld, Maiensass*. When you add to these the propensity for diminutives and for descriptive prefixes and suffixes, the result is an imposing array of words that apply to the fields they know. This, of course, is apart from the fact that each specific field has its own particular name. People are not very good at explaining the meaning of the differences that they recognize. As nearly as I can make out, the term applied to a meadow depends on its situation—whether it lies above or below the tree line, whether it gets the morning or the afternoon sun, whether it was an opening in the forest always, or at least as far as memory ran, or whether it was the product of fire in historic times. Such distinctions hardly matter in the plains; they have tremendous importance in the mountains, where habits of abstraction, in these matters at least, are lacking.

As a plainsman who derives linear, lateral impressions of space from an inspection of maps, I am again and again struck by the sensory quality of apprehension up in the mountains. Years ago I felt as lost as Hans Castorp did on his magic mountain when snow obscured the markers. The mountain people need no man-made guideposts. I can chart by compass point the *Joch* or *fenêtre* or *fürkli;* they see, without consciously seeking, the yoke, the window, the saddle. In September I was cutting downward through an unmarked wood when I found myself veering off on the flat in search of a path. I wondered why, for I was not conscious of having made a decision to do so. Then I became aware that I could hear a stream below, so that I must have known, without knowing it, that on unfamiliar terrain it was more prudent not to come too far down off a beaten trail lest I find myself at the edge of an unpassable gorge.

I have perhaps been needlessly lengthy in this preliminary suggestion that the ways of thinking in the mountains are different from those in the plains, but the point deserves the making because we usually derive our impressions from writers who are people of the plains.

Allow me now to illustrate some of those distinctive ways of thinking by telling you three stories. These stories happen to be true, and they are the products of my own observations. If need be, I could supply you with witnesses and evidence, even documents. The fact that the stories are susceptible of proof, of course, does not matter. For even had I the fictive imagination to make them up, they'd still be true in what they say about mountain-folk mentality. What they signify, if anything, is another matter.

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The first story deals with the residents of a village just beyond the forest, part of the same commune but distinctly set off from the place in which we lived. The people there had a half-hidden fear of avalanches. Not that there had been one in recent years or even within the actual memory of anyone then alive. But more so than other folk—and why I do not know—they dreaded the possibility. When asked, they repeated what everyone knew: that there had quite recently been an avalanche in Davos. Davos was a big city, and it stood to reason that a disaster which damaged so large and powerful a town would overwhelm a little hamlet. Something had to be done.

I have never been quite sure about the precise allocation of governmental responsibility over there in matters such as these. A federal research institute devoted itself to the study of avalanches, and apparently, under some circumstances, those authorities were willing to assist. But appeals from this village were unavailing; as far as science could foretell, the avalanche danger was slight. Nor did the cantonal officials help, although they seemed forever involved in numerous petty details connected with control of the forests and of the roads. The commune of which the village was a part did extend a little aid, but I suspect less out of conviction than out of a desire to pacify a significant bloc of voters in the assembly.

All in all, however, outside support counted for little; the men of the village did the work themselves. In periods of relatively low activity, during the summer and late in the fall, they were up high above, antlike, beaverlike, day after day erecting a barrier to halt any future fall. To supplement the heavy timbers ordinarily used, they somehow secured a supply of old steel beams or rails, which they laboriously dragged up into place.

Thus the toil went on from year to year. Although few actually shirked their share of the task, the young men grumbled, and the complaints grew louder with the passage of time. Nothing had happened, and this work came to seem unnecessary to the youths. They had, after all, received assurances from the highest level of authority that the effort was not needed; and they, unlike their elders, could think of other more diverting ways of using time than in a labor that was never finished. For it was in the nature of the barrier—or rather, by the time we saw it, of the set of barriers—that improvements could always be imagined: supporting lines above and on the flanks, more strength at the base, and the like. Meanwhile nothing tested the worth of what had now become one of the chief preoccupations of the village.

One night in the early spring the test did come. There were warnings. Two days before, the cantonal police arrived and ordered the people of one of the lateral valleys to evacuate their homes and take up

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lodgings in town. But the village, they insisted, would remain safe. Then, before dawn, the avalanche defied science, swerved unexpectedly, and came down across the eastern corner of the hamlet. The flow of ice and snow, carrying masses of rock with it, swept away an ancient forest, cut deep gashes into the lower meadow, and demolished a cluster of houses, burying the sleeping occupants. As for the barrier, it was in the right place but totally ineffective, wiped out in a matter of seconds.

Later, when the danger of further slides had subsided, people came soberly to look, and there was much shaking of heads. But the general tone was acquiescence. So the mountain behaved; we did what we could, but defeat was not surprising.

Still later began the immense job of clearing away the debris. Then, late in the summer and on into the fall, the men once more climbed upward and resumed the task of constructing the barrier. That was not surprising.

What was surprising was that the sons now ceased to grumble. We knew well one of the modern young men, son of a peasant of average means who had somehow acquired a locksmith's skill. He did not actually practice that trade but worked in a metal factory about fifteen miles away where he designed hinges, handles, locks, and other products of iron and brass. His income was good; he had contacts with the world away from the village; and he maintained those contacts with a snappy Fiat equipped with speakers, back as well as front, that announced his presence in the neighborhood. In the long summer evenings and on weekends, he hastened back from the factory to put in a few hours on the barrier.

Since he had earlier been one of the leading malcontents, I asked him why he now put in so much time and effort. He had evidently given no thought at all to the question and stared in astonishment that it should be asked.

"But," he said, "there is much to do before the winter sets in, and the fathers will not be able to do it all alone. Help is necessary."

Neither he nor anyone else, then or later, considered the evidence: if an avalanche did come, the barrier built with the toil of years would be ineffective. That judgment simply did not enter into their calculation. An avalanche would come again someday and one did what one could, without weighing the chances of success.

I draw no conclusions from this story—which, however, reminds me of another.

Usually, when we paid the rent for our house, we went around to the tavern over which our landlady presided. Formality required that we spend some time there—a drink, a snack—which was not in itself un-

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usual, except that this particular tavern was much frequented by locals, and rather off the beaten track for outsiders. Usually a card game was in progress around the big table by the stove. And invariably one middle-aged man, rather battered, was an onlooker, never a player. He hoisted his beers cheerfully, but after a point, we noticed, the waitresses ceased to take his orders.

We once asked our landlady why he never played. She shrugged the question off—he was the man who took care of the pigs and therefore he had to leave early. Why? Because to take care of the pigs he must get up well before dawn each morning, collect the slops from a rather wide area, and bring them up to the rather out-of-the-way corner where he tended the needs of his own pigs and those others in his charge. All this he had to do before the active life of the village began.

In the months that followed, nothing changed the relationship of the man who took care of the pigs to his neighbors. He remained a solitary, morose figure, and we began to feel that he was somewhat put upon. We saw him as the community's helpless, victimized underman.

Not at all, expostulated the landlady when we once expressed these sentimental observations. The man who took care of the pigs owned land on the northern slope worth millions.

Originally, it seems, this land had been rather swampy, difficult to drain, and not suitable for tillage. Now, however, the whole area was much improved; for better management of the river-flow had dried out the bordering plots. The tracts held by the man who took care of the pigs were as good as any in the valley.

In any case, that was not the issue—not any longer, that is; not since those people from Zurich turned up who wished precisely that plot on which to build a mammoth condominium. Apparently from their point of view the low-lying situation was ideal.

Why did he not sell?

As to that, there were divisions of opinion. The people from the city had told him how much better off he would be. He could sleep late, he could drink what he liked, and he could gamble to his heart's content—even play in the casino at Lucerne. And some of the wealthier residents had confirmed this to him. They, after all, knew that the commune would gain taxes from the new construction, and those in turn would lower their own.

But to all these arguments he gave a single response: "And who will take care of the pigs?"

And most of the men in the tavern agreed with him, which is why they did not wish him too sorely tempted by drink or cards.

The third story occurred in another village, in the west rather than in

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the east, in a poorer place situated on a gorge whose slopes were so steep that they accommodated, properly speaking, no roads. There was not a beast of burden on that mountain; everything that had to be moved, men carried on their backs or dragged along on carts.

There were not very many carts, and most of them were much alike: two axles, four wheels, a single shaft. But one was different, mounted with two shafts, so that, drawn by its owner, it left the clear impression that it had been meant for the harness of a horse or donkey.

We had learned by then how to ask questions, and how to be patient while answers slowly emerged, sometimes weeks later.

"Why such a curious cart for up here?"

"Oh, that belongs to the man who talks to his horse."

So it seemed there had once been a horse. How the horse got up there, or why the man sustained him, we never heard explained. One story had it that the owner had ridden in the Swiss cavalry, which had allowed him to take his horse home like a gun or saber. Plausible—there was a Swiss cavalry; but we could not be sure that had truly been the practice.

In any case, there had been a horse, and the name of the horse had been Max, and the man had spent a great deal of time talking to Max. The man was a person of some intelligence; for instance, he read, really read, the *Journal de Genève,* and no doubt discussed its contents with Max.

Now, it seems that originally there had not been a cart, just Max. But the peasants had disapproved. The horse ate like a horse—that is, he consumed more than a human being did—and it was not proper that Max should live in idleness while everyone else worked. In time all this censorious gossip reached the ears of the man who talked to his horse, and he decided to do something about it. His response had profound consequences for the village. He purchased the cart and offered to deliver fresh bread from the baker every morning to such households as wished it.

One result of this was to legitimize Max. Another was a change in dietary habits. The peasants who had formerly consumed hard dark bread, which remained edible for weeks on end, now acquired a taste for gray or half-white or even white bread baked fresh daily.

But where was Max?

Well, it seemed that Max had died some years before. Now the man who had talked to his horse talked to himself, and himself pulled the cart.

But why should he do so, since it was no longer necessary to legitimize the presence of the horse?

Well, was the answer, who would deliver the bread?

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I will not presume to sum up the meaning of these stories, other than to reflect that they show something about the distinctive way of thinking of the people who live in the mountains. Yet I have a sense that the cast of mind here revealed is laden with significance for historians, most of whom are people of the plains and therefore fail to read the lessons the mountains teach.

There is the matter of perspective, for instance, as important to the historian as to the painter. The image of the mountain viewed from below is that of the panoramic postcard; the tourist sends home a picture of Mont Blanc, or of the Matterhorn, or of the Jungfrau, each a conical peak rising in grandeur toward the sky.

Yet the men of the mountain know that Mont Blanc when viewed from across the lake to the north presents one appearance; seen from Val d'Aosta to the south an entirely different one. Both are equally true; that is, both are equally false. The picture imprinted on a postcard depends upon the perspective—that is, upon the interpretation and the position of the photographer; which, after all, is a phenomenon often troubling to historians who worry about their objectivity and about the biases of their points of view.

And yet, there really is a mountain. Only the observer does not get to know it by looking at postcards, any more than the historian can master an event or an era by pondering the outlines of great overarching interpretations. To those familiar with its ridged and wrinkled flanks, with its spread of jagged stone, and with the immense variety of its restless streams, the mountain is far from displaying a clear, conical shape. It offers, rather, the sum of many particular visual impressions—slopes of wood and stone and grass, lines of rock and water, huddled buildings, gaps of sky—which merge in the mind of the viewer endowed with patience and imagination. As do the numerous scraps of evidence hoarded by the historian. All those problems about objectivity and point of view that trouble historians dissolve in the mountain atmosphere.

Which brings me at last to the great Edward Gibbon, the anniversary of whose great work we all celebrated last year. I have nothing to add to the eloquent words of appreciation already lavished upon this man of many talents, whose mastery of the pen matched perfectly his understanding of the past. I speak of Gibbon only as an observer of the mountains. And in that capacity he was sadly deficient—content, alas, to sit in Lausanne and look across the lake. He never ventured himself to foot the trail; the cultivated people of his generation had not yet acquired the taste for strenuous peasant activity, and he was personally less inclined to physical exertion than most of his contemporaries. Yet had he ventured a score of miles from his languid habitation, he might not have

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slipped into the disastrous use of the metaphor that shapes the character of his masterpiece.

We have had careful studies of the evolution of the concept of decline and fall of civilizations, but no one has yet pointed out that the underlying metaphor is fundamentally erroneous. It assumes an analogy between the development of a civilization, or a society, or a state, and the shape of a mountain. The very concept of decline implies a slope pointing downward and leading to an ultimate fall—over the edge of a cliff, perhaps. Its antithesis is rise, an ever-upward gradient leading to a culminating peak. These are the figures of speech appropriate to a resident of Lausanne who looks across the lake.

Those who know the mountain, however, see an entirely different set of images. They cannot imagine a steady upward climb as a metaphor for civilization, because they know that ascent to the top exposes only a blank. From the peak I have usually seen nothing unless, on a rare clear day, I could look down at the clouds below. Then too, those captivated by the figure of speech never think of what comes after the summit. Of all the lowland romantics who were enthusiastic about progress, only William Godwin worried about what would happen after attaining the peak; and he quickly brushed off the problem in the certainty that once disease and death had disappeared, man would never have to go over the top. Yet in actuality he who reaches the peak can do nothing but descend, and is constantly in danger, exposed to every form of discomfort. The meanings attached to their peaks by those who have attained them vary with their personalities, but I cannot imagine a peak ever serving as a symbol of civilization.

It is the same, I suppose, with all suggestions of height. My first airplane flight was in a trimotor Ford, at between a thousand and two thousand feet. Skimming the rooftops, I could see everything—the color of cars, the movement of pedestrians. Taking the fast flight from Boston to Chicago, with intermediate stops at Albany, Rochester, Buffalo, and Cleveland, the pilot thrilled the dozen passengers by flying close to the falls at Niagara. Flight at thirty-five thousand feet offers no comparable sensation; a window seat, even on a clear day, opens on no view of details in the world far below. Being up is being away.

People who live in the mountains know that getting down to the valley brings them to civilization. It is of the essence of the mountain that it enfolds valleys. Therein it differs from the plain, which neither thrusts upward nor plunges downward. And in the valley, where streams merge into rivers, the towns glisten in the fascination of the unfamiliar.

But the process of reaching the goal is by no means simple. Jean Giono, a writer familiar with the mountains, has expressed some of the complexity of getting there in *Joy of Man's Desiring:*

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You are on the summit of a hill and dawn has not yet come, and your path goes on before you. You can think that all is flat in front of you because the darkness is ahead where anything can be imagined. But gradually day dawns and, behold, now you see before you at first a little valley that grows deeper, and behind this land other valleys, then mountains, peak after peak, far into the distance. I do not lack courage. Men do not lack courage. I think that I will go down into the valley, mount the slope on the opposite side, and gradually, with my courage and my strength and my hope, I'll climb up the path over the highest mountains. But now the light grows brighter, and deeper and deeper sinks the valley before me. The first valley, the one that is quite close to me, that just now was full of night and in which the road seemed to lie as straight as a rod. There it drops deeper and deeper. What I thought a while ago to be the bottom was only a sheet of mist; the bottom is far below. And now in the brighter light I see bushes and undergrowth on the sides of that slope, and forests and thorns, and the tracks of wild beasts, and ravines and walls of rock. And the light grows brighter, and something tells me that it will continue to grow brighter from moment to moment to all eternity, revealing more and more thorns and walls, and obstacles, and lurking dangers, and crossings, and impediments.

I recalled this passage not long ago when, coming up from the valley of the Landwasser, I climbed over the Strela Pass and then made my way down to a place called Tritt; and from that point I could see, actually see, Arosa, which was my destination. But then the path dipped so that the goal was out of sight, and when finally my way rose again and approached a cluster of houses, it was not Arosa at all but Medergen, still a long distance off. So that when Arosa next came into sight, I was already conscious that there was far from a direct line to it, but rather fold after fold, with slopes leading both up and down.

A transient, I reached the town and passed through intact. But mountain people fear the hazards and tend to play it safe. Tradition, the tenacious devotion to inherited tasks, and the intuitive sense of place, traits admirable in the highlands, become encumbrances down below. Down there the sun does rise in the east and set in the west; a straight line, driven through space, becomes the shortest distance between two points; men calculate in abstractions—all of which are qualities of civilization. Therefore only the most venturesome risk the descent; others cling to the villages on the upper slopes until some external force dislodges them.

In our day modernization is such a force, its effects evident in patterns of life, habits, even language. When I first came to the Valais, people spoke their own version of French: they said *septant* and *nonant*, pronounced the *x* in Crettex and Chamonix, and softened the *i* in Finhaut. Now television has taught them to talk like Parisians: they say *soixante-dix* and *quatre-vingt-dix* and Crettex and Chamonix and Finhaut. I came down into Champex and asked about the bus to Orsières. It

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would leave in an hour. Many years before, I had walked down to Orsières, but the place had changed so much I could not remember where the path started. To my inquiry, they responded, "But it is not dear, the autobus," as if lack of means were the only reason for walking. But then I do not insist that they cling to old values in order to gratify the onlooker's sense of the picturesque.

In the past, intrusions from outside took other forms. Ancestors of the families I knew had resisted and, when dislodged, had retreated to high places elsewhere to escape the misfortune of change. I speak, of course, of but a tiny corner of the earth, but not an inconsequential one. Here from the glaciers the two rivers rise, the one—the Rhone—to flow generally westward and then, looping through the lake, southward to the Mediterranean; the other—the Rhine—to flow eastward, then north to the Low Countries and out to the sea. Here much of the history of Europe took form.

The Walzer first made themselves known in the west, in villages like those of the man who talked to his horse. To escape the oppressive bishops who were their overlords they drifted eastward to ever higher ground, then discovered and moved through the passes to lands as yet unoccupied. They got as far as places now called Schlappin and Monbiel, where their descendants took care of the pigs and feared the avalanches. Here they stopped, for down below was a powerful monastery that blocked further advance. And when the Reformation enabled them to drive away the monks and level the cloister, they found that another folk stemming from the Arlberg had preempted the lower valley. Here the Walzer remained, therefore, and remain to this day.

The wisdom of the mountain people recognizes the lay of the land; it is among the greatest of their misfortunes to distinguish what is feasible from what is yearned for. "So one gives up the hope of scaling those peaks where, however, the light is sparkling like the leaping of a wild goat. And so one gives up thinking that one's strength and courage and hope will permit one to descend even into the first little valley that deepens from one moment to the next. But now, in despair, one cries within one's self: 'let me take only one step forward. That is all that my strength will permit!' And the light keeps growing brighter!"

In their own way, the valley people are timid too, ringed in as they are by fearsome forests and by mountains to which they cannot retreat, having lost the ancestral skills of survival. Not for nothing does the word *alp* have for them the additional meaning of nightmare. Exposed to the comings and goings of strangers, they must learn to deal flexibly with the ever unexpected and to make the most of contingencies, however much they may strengthen their fortifications and subject themselves to internal discipline. Or, alternatively, for some of them at least, the situation

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demands fresh venturing and new efforts at ascent and descent.

Where are we? Had I the skill of analysis of those historians who play with long sweeps of the past, I could perhaps draw meaningful analogies between the mountain landscape and the modern experience. That is not my style.

I conclude, therefore, with a comment that is simply personal.

My own lifetime spans more than six decades of wearying endeavor, with many a steep climb upward and not a few precipitous clamberings down. So that now we find ourselves in a valley, aching for ease so as to enjoy our achievements. Whether we shall be indulged in that hope is largely beyond our control.

But the light has grown immeasurably brighter in the interval since my birth. We know now that no simple journey will bring us to the summit. Indeed we cannot be sure where the summit lies or, in fact, whether it exists at all, for our valley is high enough to reveal the complexity of the surrounding ranges. Therein we are both more, and less, fortunate than our predecessors only a generation ago.

We can take only one step forward. That is all our strength will permit.

But the challenging light keeps growing brighter. And when I falter, hestitate to take that next small step, I remind myself that it is not from failing strength, or lack of skill, or want of courage, but because the light is brighter and reveals the perils on the way.

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In Want

I. A. Richards

I

Turn thou me and I shall be turned
Jeremiah, 31:6

What do, what should, I want?
    Whatever may
        Be my most inward eye
This knowledge grant!
    For this let me yet pray.

Grant this through which I long
    Effective power
        Over the thwart in me
To cure what's wrong
    And not but for an hour.

My wantings—all I lack—
    Constrain,
        Shroud up, my inmost eye,
Shut in, hold back,
    Leave other seeing vain.

But yet this ruling want—
    That strain
        Being the core in me,
The source, the font—
    Could have me turn again.

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II

Of the soare faulcon so I learne to fly
Spenser, "An Hymne of Heavenlie Beautie"
stanza 9

Socrates told that wings
Alone could show
Whither and why to look
On those real things
Can teach us how to know.

Since then we've learnt to fly,
Now understand
How on a wing there forms
A void that grips the sky
As can henceforth be planned.

On this our planes depend
And all air-foils,
Socratic wings as well.
These wants have shaped our end
Governed all chosen toils.

Whatever wings we watch
They sail thereby:
Hawk, seagull, soul or kite.
Who would some inkling catch
Of us, look to the sky.

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III

Then want must be your master

Each want deftly supplies
A growing need,
Meets it continually.
And let not this surprise
Since every venturing seed

That lives, divides and grows
And comes to be
Bearer of seed in turn,
Through chains of wants arose,
And inescapably.

Their wants they were; as we
Are what we want.
The rest the shadow is
That limns what we might be
As *Can*'s defined by *Can't*.

So being comes about,
Incomplete still,
Of old, as now, and ever.
Beyond the touch of doubt
Good finds its grounds in ill.

✪ I. A. RICHARDS, the distinguished poet and critic, is author of *Complementarities*, a collection of previously unpublished work written between 1919 and 1975.

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The Nobel Lecture

SAUL BELLOW

I WAS A VERY CONTRARY UNDERGRADUATE more than forty years ago. It was my habit to register for a course and then to do most of my reading in another field of study, so that when I should have been grinding away at "Money and Banking," I was reading the novels of Joseph Conrad. I have never had reason to regret this. Perhaps Conrad appealed to me because he was like an American—he was an uprooted Pole sailing exotic seas, speaking French and writing English with extraordinary power and beauty. Nothing could be more natural to me, the child of immigrants who grew up in one of Chicago's immigrant neighborhoods than—of course!—a Slav who was a British sea captain and knew his way around Marseilles and wrote an Oriental sort of English. But Conrad's *real* life had little oddity in it. His themes were straightforward—fidelity, command, the traditions of the sea, hierarchy, the fragile rules sailors follow when they are struck by a typhoon. He believed in the strength of these fragile-seeming rules, and in his art. His views on art were simply stated in the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. There he said that art was an attempt to render the highest justice to the visible universe: that it tried to find in that universe, in matter as well as in the facts of life, what was fundamental, enduring, essential. The writer's method of attaining the essential was different from that of the thinker or the scientist. These, said Conrad, knew the world by systematic examination. To begin with, the artist had only himself; he descended within himself and in the lonely regions to which he descended he found "the terms of his appeal." He appealed, said Conrad, "to that part of our being which is a gift, not an acquisition, to the capacity for delight and wonder . . . our sense of pity and pain, to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation—and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts . . . which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn."

This fervent statement was written some eighty years ago and we may want to take it with a few grains of contemporary salt. I belong to a

SAUL BELLOW is the distinguished American novelist, author of, among other books, *Herzog*, *Humboldt's Gift*, and *To Jerusalem and Back*. In 1976 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

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generation of readers that knew the long list of noble or noble-sounding words, words like "invincible conviction" or "humanity" that had been rejected by writers like Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway spoke for the soldiers who fought in the First World War under the inspiration of Woodrow Wilson and other orotund statesmen whose big words had to be measured against the frozen corpses of young men paving the trenches. Hemingway's youthful readers were convinced that the horrors of the twentieth century had sickened and killed humanistic beliefs with their deadly radiations. I told myself, therefore, that Conrad's rhetoric must be resisted. But I never thought him mistaken. He spoke directly to me. The feeling individual appeared weak—he felt nothing but his own weakness. But if he accepted his weakness and his separateness and descended into himself, intensifying his loneliness, he discovered his solidarity with other isolated creatures.

I feel no need now to sprinkle Conrad's sentences with skeptical salt. But there are writers for whom the Conradian novel—all novels of that sort—are gone forever. Finished. There is, for instance, M. Alain Robbe-Grillet, one of the leaders of French literature, a spokesman for "thingism"—*choseisme*. He writes that in great contemporary works, Sartre's *Nausea*, Camus's *The Stranger*, or Kafka's *The Castle*, there are no characters; you find in such books not individuals but—well, entities. "The novel of characters," he says, "belongs entirely in the past. It describes a period: that which marked the apogee of the individual." This is not necessarily an improvement; that Robbe-Grillet admits. But it is the truth. Individuals have been wiped out. "The present period is rather one of administrative numbers. The world's destiny has ceased, for us, to be identified with the rise and fall of certain men of certain families." He goes on to say that in the days of Balzac's bourgeoisie it was important to have a name and a character; character was a weapon in the struggle for survival and success. In that time "it was something to have a face in a universe where personality represented both the means and the end of all exploration." But our world, he concludes, is more modest. It has renounced the omnipotence of the person. But it is more ambitious as well, "since it looks beyond. The exclusive cult of the 'human' has given way to a larger consciousness, one that is less anthropocentric." However, he comforts us, a new course and the promise of new discoveries lie before us.

On an occasion like this I have no appetite for polemics. We all know what it is to be tired of "characters." Human types have become false and boring. D. H. Lawrence put it early in this century that we human beings, our instincts damaged by Puritanism, no longer cared for—were physically repulsive to—one another. "The sympathetic heart is broken," he said. He went further, "We stink in each other's nostrils."

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Besides, in Europe the power of the classics has for centuries been so great that every country has its "identifiable personalities" derived from Molière, Racine, Dickens, or Balzac. An awful phenomenon. Perhaps this is connected with the wonderful French saying, "*S'il y a un caractère, il est mauvais.*" It leads one to think that the unoriginal human race tends to borrow what it needs from convenient sources, much as new cities have often been made out of the rubble of old ones. Then, too, the psychoanalytic conception of character is that it is an ugly, rigid formation—something we must resign ourselves to, not a thing we can embrace with joy. Totalitarian ideologies, too, have attacked bourgeois individualism, sometimes identifying character with property. There is a hint of this in M. Robbe-Grillet's argument. Dislike of personality, bad masks, false being have had political results.

But I am interested here in the question of the artist's priorities. Is it necessary, or good, that he should begin with historical analyses, with ideas or systems? Proust speaks in *Time Regained* of a growing preference among young and intelligent readers for works of an elevated analytical, moral, or sociological tendency. He says that they prefer to Bergotte (the novelist in *Remembrance of Things Past*) writers who seem to them more profound. "But," says Proust, "from the moment that works of art are judged by reasoning, nothing is stable or certain, one can prove anything one likes."

The message of Robbe-Grillet is not new. It tells us that we must purge ourselves of bourgeois anthropocentricism and do the classy things that our advanced culture requires. Character? "Fifty years of disease, the death notice signed many times over by the serious essayists," says Robbe-Grillet, "yet nothing has managed to knock it off the pedestal on which the nineteenth century had placed it. It is a mummy now, but one still enthroned with the same—phony—majesty, among the values revered by traditional criticism."

The title of Robbe-Grillet's essay is "On Several Obsolete Notions." I myself am tired of obsolete notions and of mummies of all kinds but I never tire of reading the master novelists. And what is one to do about the characters in their books? Is it necessary to discontinue the investigation of character? Can anything so vivid in them now be utterly dead? Can it be that human beings are at a dead end? Is individuality really so dependent on historical and cultural conditions? Can we accept the account of those conditions we are so "authoritatively" given? I suggest that it is not in the intrinsic interest of human beings but in these ideas and accounts that the problem lies. The staleness, the inadequacy of these repels us. To find the source of trouble we must look into our own heads.

The fact that the death notice of character "has been signed by the

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most serious essayists" means only that another group of mummies, the most respectable leaders of the intellectual community, has laid down the law. It amuses me that these serious essayists should be allowed to sign the death notices of literary forms. Should art follow culture? Something has gone wrong.

There is no reason why a novelist should not drop "character" if the strategy stimulates him. But it is nonsense to do it on the theoretical ground that the period that marked the apogee of the individual, et cetera, is ended. We must not make bosses of our intellectuals. And we do them no good by letting them run the arts. Should they, when they read novels, find nothing in them but the endorsement of their own opinions? Are we here on earth to play such games?

Characters, Elizabeth Bowen once said, are not created by writers. They preexist and they have to be *found*. If we do not find them, if we fail to represent them, the fault is ours. It must be admitted, however, that finding them is not easy. The condition of human beings has perhaps never been more difficult to define. Those who tell us that we are in an early stage of universal history must be right. We are being lavishly poured together and seem to be experiencing the anguish of new states of consciousness. In America many millions of people have in the last forty years received a "higher education"—in many cases a dubious blessing. In the upheavals of the sixties we felt for the first time the effects of up-to-date teachings, concepts, sensitivities, the pervasiveness of psychological, pedagogical, and political ideas.

Every year we see scores of books and articles that tell the Americans what a state they are in—that make intelligent or simpleminded or extravagant or lurid or demented statements. All reflect the crises we are in while telling us what we must do about them; these analysts are produced by the very disorder and confusion they prescribe for. It is as a writer that I am considering their extreme moral sensitivity, their desire for perfection, their intolerance of the defects of society, the touching, the comical boundlessness of their demands, their anxiety, their irritability, their sensitivity, their tendermindedness, their goodness, their convulsiveness, the recklessness with which they experiment with drugs and touch-therapies and bombs. The ex-Jesuit Malachi Martin in his book on the Church compares the modern American to Michelangelo's sculpture, *The Captive*. He sees "an unfinished struggle to emerge whole" from a block of matter. The American "captive" is beset in his struggle by "interpretations, admonitions, forewarnings and descriptions of himself by the self-appointed prophets, priests, judges and prefabricators of his travail," says Martin.

Let me take a little time to look more closely at this travail: in private life, disorder or near-panic; in families—for husbands, wives, parents,

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children—confusion; in civic behavior, in personal loyalties, in sexual practices (I will not recite the whole list; we are tired of hearing it)—further confusion. And with this private disorder goes public bewilderment. In the papers we read what used to amuse us in science fiction—the *New York Times* speaks of death rays and of Russian and American satellites at war in space. In the November *Encounter* so sober and responsible an economist as my colleague, Milton Friedman, declares that Great Britain by its public spending will soon go the way of poor countries like Chile. He is appalled by his own forecast. What—the source of that noble tradition of freedom and democratic rights that began with the Magna Charta ending in dictatorship? "It is almost impossible for anyone brought up in that tradition to utter the word that Britain is in danger of losing freedom and democracy; and yet it is a fact!"

It is with these facts, which knock us to the ground, that we try to live. If I were debating with Professor Friedman I might ask him to take into account the resistance of institutions, the cultural differences between Great Britain and Chile, differences in national character and traditions, but my purpose is not to get into debates I can't win but to direct your attention to the terrible predictions we have to live with, the background of disorder, the vision of ruin.

You would think that one such article would be enough for a single number of a magazine but on another page of *Encounter* Professor Hugh Seton-Watson discusses George Kennan's recent survey of American degeneracy and its dire meaning for the world. Describing America's failure, Kennan speaks of crime, urban decay, drug addiction, pornography, frivolity, deteriorated educational standards, and concludes that our immense power counts for nothing. We cannot lead the world and, undermined by sinfulness, we may not be able to defend ourselves. Professor Seton-Watson writes, "Nothing can defend a society if its upper 100,000 men and women, both the decision-makers and those who help to mould the thinking of the decision-makers, are resolved to capitulate."

So much for the capitalist superpower. Now what about its ideological adversaries? I turn the pages of *Encounter* to a short study by Mr. George Watson, lecturer in English at Cambridge, on the racialism of the Left. He tells us that Hyndman, the founder of the Social Democratic Federation, called the South African war the Jews' war; that the Webbs at times expressed racialist views (as did Ruskin, Carlyle, and T. H. Huxley before them); he relates that Engels denounced the smaller Slav peoples of Eastern Europe as counter-revolutionary ethnic trash; and Mr. Watson in conclusion cites a public statement by Ulrike Meinhof of the West German "Red Army Faction," made at a judicial

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hearing in 1972, approving of "revolutionary extermination." For her, German anti-Semitism of the Hitler period was essentially anti-capitalist. "Auschwitz," she is quoted as saying, "meant that six million Jews were killed and thrown on the waste heap of Europe for what they were: money Jews (Geldjuden)."

I mention these racialists of the Left to show that for us there is no simple choice between the children of light and the children of darkness. Good and evil are not symmetrically distributed along political lines. But I have made my point; we stand open to all anxieties. The decline and fall of everything is our daily dread; we are agitated in private life and tormented by public questions.

And art and literature—what of them? Well, there is a violent uproar but we are not absolutely dominated by it. We are still able to think, to discriminate, and to feel. The purer, subtler, higher activities have not succumbed to fury or to nonsense. Not yet. Books continue to be written and read. It may be more difficult to reach the whirling mind of a modern reader but it is possible to cut through the noise and reach the quiet zone. In the quiet zone we may find that he is devoutly waiting for us. When complications increase, the desire for essentials increases too. The unending cycle of crises that began with the First World War has formed a kind of person, one who has lived through terrible, strange things, and in whom there is an observable shrinkage of prejudices, a casting off of disappointing ideologies, an ability to live with many kinds of madness, and immense desire for certain durable human goods—truth, for instance, or freedom, or wisdom. I don't think I am exaggerating; there is plenty of evidence for this. Disintegration? Well, yes. Much is disintegrating but we are experiencing also an odd kind of refining process. And this has been going on for a long time. Looking into Proust's *Time Regained* I find that he was clearly aware of it. His novel, describing French society during the Great War, tests the strength of his art. Without art, he insists, shirking no personal or collective horrors, we do not know ourselves or anyone else. Only art penetrates what pride, passion, intelligence, and habit erect on all sides—the seeming realities of this world. There is another reality, the genuine one, that we lose sight of. This other reality is always sending us hints, which, without art, we can't receive. Proust calls these hints our "true impressions." The true impressions, our persistent intuitions, will, without art, be hidden from us and we will be left with nothing but a "terminology for practical ends which we falsely call life." Tolstoy put the matter in much the same way. A book like his *Ivan Ilyitch* also describes these same "practical ends" that conceal both life and death from us. In his final sufferings Ivan Ilyitch becomes an individual, a "character," by tearing down the concealments, by seeing through the "practical ends."

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Proust was still able to keep a balance between art and destruction, insisting that art was a necessity of life, a great independent reality, a magical power. But for a long time art has not been connected, as it was in the past, with the main human enterprise. The historian Edgar Wind tells us in *Art and Anarchy* that Hegel long ago observed that art no longer engaged the central energies of man. These energies were now engaged by science—a "relentless spirit of rational inquiry." Art had moved to the margins. There it formed "a wide and splendidly varied horizon." In an age of science, people still painted and wrote poetry but, said Hegel, however splendid the gods looked in modern works of art and whatever dignity and perfection we might find "in the images of God the Father and the Virgin Mary," it was of no use: we no longer bent our knees. It has been a long time since the knees were bent in piety. Ingenuity, daring exploration, freshness of invention have replaced the art of "direct relevance." The most significant achievement of this pure art, in Hegel's view, was that, freed from its former responsibilities, it was no longer "serious." Instead it raised the soul through the "serenity of form above any painful involvement in the limitations of reality." I don't know who would make such a claim today for an art that raises the soul above painful involvements with reality. Nor am I sure that, at this moment, it is the spirit of rational inquiry in pure science that engages the central energies of man. The center seems (temporarily perhaps) to be filled up with the crises I have been describing.

There were European writers in the nineteenth century who would not give up the connection of literature with the main human enterprise. The very suggestion would have shocked Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. But in the West a separation between great artists and the general public took place. They developed a marked contempt for the average reader and the bourgeois mass. The best of them saw clearly enough what sort of civilization Europe had produced. The historian Erich Auerbach tells us that it was brilliant but unstable, vulnerable, fated to be overtaken by catastrophe. Some of these writers, he says, produced "strange and vaguely terrifying works, or shocked the public by paradoxical and extreme opinions. Many of them took no trouble to facilitate the understanding of what they wrote—whether out of contempt for the public, the cult of their own inspiration, or a certain tragic weakness which prevented them from being at once simple and true."

In the twentieth century theirs is still the main influence, for despite a show of radicalism and innovation our contemporaries are really very conservative. They follow their nineteenth-century leaders and hold to the old standard, interpreting history and society much as they were interpreted in the last century. What would writers do today if it would

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occur to them that literature might once again engage those "central energies," if they were to recognize that an immense desire had arisen for a return from the periphery, for what was simple and true?

Of course we can't come back to the center simply because we want to; but the fact that we are wanted might matter to us, and the force of the crisis is so great that it may summon us back to such a center. But prescriptions are futile. One can't tell writers what to do. The imagination must find its own path. But one can fervently wish that they—that we—would come back from the periphery. We do not, we writers, represent mankind adequately. What account do Americans give of themselves? What accounts of them are given by psychologists, sociologists, historians, journalists, and writers? In a kind of contractual daylight they see themselves in the ways with which we are so desperately familiar. These images of contractual daylight, so boring to Robbe-Grillet and to me, originate in the contemporary world view. We put into our books the consumer, civil servant, football fan, lover, television viewer. And in the contractual daylight version their life is a kind of death. There is another life, coming from an insistent sense of what we are, that denies these daylight formulations and the false life—the death in life—they make for us. For it is false, and we know it, and our secret and incoherent resistance to it cannot stop, for that resistance arises from persistent intuitions. Perhaps humankind cannot bear too much reality, but neither can it bear too much unreality, too much abuse of the truth.

We do not think well of ourselves; we do not think amply about what we are. Our collective achievements have so greatly "exceeded" us that we "justify" ourselves by pointing to them. It is the jet plane in which we commonplace human beings have crossed the Atlantic in four hours that embodies such value as we can claim. Then we hear that this is closing time in the gardens of the West, that the end of our capitalist civilization is at hand. Some years ago Cyril Connolly wrote that we were about to undergo "a complete mutation, not merely to be defined as the collapse of the capitalist system, but such a sea-change in the nature of reality as could not have been envisaged by Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud." This means that we are not yet sufficiently shrunken; we must prepare to be smaller still. I am not sure whether this should be called intellectual analysis or analysis by an intellectual. The disasters are disasters. It would be worse than stupid to call them victories as some statesmen have tried to do. But I am drawing attention to the fact that there is in the intellectual community a sizable inventory of attitudes that have become respectable—notions about society, human nature, class, politics, sex, about mind, about the physical universe, the evolution of life. Few writers, even among the best, have taken the trouble to reexamine these attitudes or orthodoxies. Such attitudes only glow more

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powerfully in Joyce or D. H. Lawrence than in the books of lesser men; they are everywhere and no one challenges them seriously. Since the twenties, how many novelists have taken a second look at D. H. Lawrence, or argued a different view of sexual potency or the effects of industrial civilization on the instincts? Literature has for nearly a century used the same stock of ideas, myths, strategies. "The most serious essayists of the last fifty years," says Robbe-Grillet. Yes, indeed. Essay after essay, book after book, confirm the most serious thoughts—Baudelairean, Nietzschean, Marxian, psychoanalytic, et cetera, et cetera—of these most serious essayists. What Robbe-Grillet says about character can be said also about these ideas, maintaining all the usual things about mass society, dehumanization, and the rest. How weary we are of them. How poorly they represent us. The pictures they offer no more resemble us than we resemble the reconstructed reptiles and other monsters in a museum of paleontology. We are much more limber, versatile, better articulated; there is much more to us; we all feel it.

What is at the center now? At the moment, neither art nor science, but mankind determining, in confusion and obscurity, whether it will endure or go under. The whole species—everybody—has gotten into the act. At such a time it is essential to lighten ourselves, to dump encumbrances, including the encumbrances of education and all organized platitudes, to make judgments of our own, to perform acts of our own. Conrad was right to appeal to that part of our being which is a gift. We must hunt for that under the wreckage of many systems. The failure of those systems may bring a blessed and necessary release from formulations, from an overdefined and misleading consciousness. With increasing frequency I dismiss as merely respectable opinions I have long held—or thought I held—and try to discern what I have really lived by, and what others live by. As for Hegel's art freed from "seriousness" and glowing on the margins, raising the soul above painful involvement in the limitations of reality through the serenity of form, that can exist nowhere now, during this struggle for survival. However, it is not as though the people who engaged in this struggle had only a rudimentary humanity, without culture, and knew nothing of art. Our very vices, our mutilations, show how rich we are in thought and culture. How much we know. How much we even feel. The struggle that convulses us makes us want to simplify, to reconsider, to eliminate the tragic weakness that prevented writers—and readers—from being at once simple and true.

Writers are greatly respected. The intelligent public is wonderfully patient with them, continues to read them, and endures disappointment after disappointment, waiting to hear from art what it does not hear from theology, philosophy, social theory, and what it cannot hear from pure science. Out of the struggle at the center has come an immense, painful

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longing for a broader, more flexible, fuller, more coherent, more comprehensive account of what we human beings are, who we are, and what this life is for. At the center, humankind struggles with collective powers for its freedom; the individual struggles with dehumanization for the possession of his soul. If writers do not come again into the center it will not be because the center is preempted. It is not. They are free to enter. If they so wish.

The essence of our real condition, the complexity, the confusion, the pain of it, is shown to us in glimpses, in what Proust and Tolstoy thought of as "true impressions." This essence reveals, and then conceals, itself. When it goes away it leaves us again in doubt. But we never seem to lose our connection with the depths from which these glimpses come. The sense of our real powers, powers we seem to derive from the universe itself, also comes and goes. We are reluctant to talk about this because there is nothing we can prove, because our language is inadequate, and because few people are willing to risk talking about it. They would have to say, "There is a spirit," and that is taboo. So almost everyone keeps quiet about it, although almost everyone is aware of it.

The value of literature lies in these intermittent "true impressions." A novel moves back and forth between the world of objects, of actions, of appearances, and that other world from which these "true impressions" come and which moves us to believe that the good we hang on to so tenaciously—in the face of evil, so obstinately—is no illusion.

No one who has spent years in the writing of novels can be unaware of this. The novel can't be compared to the epic, or to the monuments of poetic drama. But it is the best we can do just now. It is a sort of latter-day lean-to, a hovel in which the spirit takes shelter. A novel is balanced between a few true impressions and the multitude of false ones that make up most of what we call life. It tells us that for every human being there is a diversity of existences, that the single existence is itself an illusion in part, that these many existences signify something, tend to something, fulfill something; it promises us meaning, harmony, and even justice. What Conrad said was true: art attempts to find in the universe, in matter as well as in the facts of life, what is fundamental, enduring, essential.

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A Conversation with Charles Eames

OWEN GINGERICH

FROM THE SHOP OF CHARLES AND RAY EAMES have flowed some of the most influential ideas in modern design. These include prize-winning chairs that are part of the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art; the original concept and development of multimedia shows; and a series of exhibitions that have culminated in "The World of Franklin and Jefferson," which opened at the Grand Palais in Paris in 1976.

For some years the Eames's shop has been a converted automotive garage in Venice, California. Unpretentious and anonymous on the outside, it still proclaims "24-hour Towing Service" and "Fenders and Body Work." Inside, the shop has been likened to "the Whole Earth Catalog *in three dimensions." In cluttered surroundings—antique toys, avant-garde posters, exhibition models, moviolas, and peepshows—Charles Eames, his wife Ray, and their staff of about twenty craftsmen simultaneously juggle a dozen or so projects. Pinups from the recent Eames retrospective at UCLA vie for wall space with ancient memorabilia and scenes from the current refilming of* Powers of Ten. *In the comparative isolation of the projection room, where I had just viewed a triple-screen slide show on the Tall Ships, I captured Charles for a rambling, uninterrupted conversation.*

OWEN GINGERICH: Most people, I believe, think of you in terms of chairs. I remember so well how, when we were starting on the Copernicus show, we arrived at the Arlanda Airport in Sweden and you looked around and said, "These are all my chairs."

CHARLES EAMES: I probably said, "These are all *our* chairs."

GINGERICH: Never mind.

EAMES: But it's unlike me to say "*my* chairs."

GINGERICH: But nevertheless they were from your designs. Were they Scandinavian copies, or were they really imported?

OWEN GINGERICH, professor of astronomy and the history of science at Harvard University, has been a consultant on Eames exhibitions off and on for roughly a decade.

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EAMES: By that time there were licensed manufacturers in Europe. But honestly, it's a disappointment to walk into a Swedish airport and not see good Swedish chairs. It's sort of like walking into a European restaurant and being offered a Kansas City steak. Particularly in Scandinavia, as a traveler you should be allowed to enjoy some indigenous quality and some exotic experience.

GINGERICH: Most people would call you a designer, but I know you prefer to think of yourself as an architect. How do the chairs fit into that?

EAMES: I think I've mentioned to you that we consider this all as architecture: the chairs are architecture, the films—they have structure just as the front page of a newspaper has structure. The chairs are literally like architecture in miniature. For an architect who has difficulty controlling a building because of the contractor and the various forces brought to bear on anything that costs that much money, a chair is almost handleable on a human scale, and so you find great architects turning to chairs: Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Aalto, Eero Saarinen—any number of them doing it, because this is architecture you can get your hands on.

GINGERICH: Do you have an objection to the word "designer"?

EAMES: It is not that I'm embarrassed about "designer" so much as the degree to which I prefer the word "architect" and what it implies. It implies structure, a kind of analysis, as well as a kind of tradition behind it. I was put on the spot by some students at Oxford because of things I had said about the world of painting and sculpture, and they said, "How do you think of yourself?" I said I really think of myself as a tradesman. The question was whether or not I thought of myself as an artist, and I'm a little taken aback by anyone calling himself an artist because of my feeling that that's the kind of designation other people should give. You can *be* an artist in any field, but getting a degree to *call* yourself an artist would be like getting a diploma to call yourself a genius.

I call myself a tradesman, but any good tradesman should work only on problems that come within his genuine interest, and you solve a problem for your client where your two interests overlap. You would do an injustice to both yourself and your client to work on a problem of interest to the client but not to you—it just wouldn't work. In that spirit we are tradesmen. If your work is good enough, it can be art, but art isn't a product. It's a quality. Sometimes that's lost sight of. Quality can be in anything.

GINGERICH: Concerning the chairs, I've heard that you've never patented any of them. Is that correct?

EAMES: No, it's not. In the late thirties and early forties we were working on molded plywood techniques, and this was a very expensive procedure that could be used only for airplanes. We were terribly

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concerned about being able to make compound curves in a way that would be less expensive. Because of the general state of affairs, we had to take out patents on six or eight things related to the technology, and along with them, as demonstrations, were some of the early chairs. One of the things we had committed ourselves to was trying to do a chair with a hard surface that was as comfortable as it could be in relation to the human body and also that would be self-explanatory as you looked at it—no mysteries, so that the techniques of how it was made would be part of the aesthetics. We felt very strongly about this, because at the time there were so many things made with the opposite idea in mind, that is, to disguise a thing as if it were made at the Gobelin factories in Paris, when in fact it had been manufactured by modern techniques.

So we had these things in mind. We had patents, and at first the patents turned out to be valuable assets in terms of protection. But pretty soon we found that if we worked with a patent in mind—well, you know certain things are patentable and certain things not patentable. Now what divides the patentable from the non-patentable is entirely different from what divides the good and appropriate from the bad and the inappropriate. If one has bitten the apple and been seduced into the idea of having a patentable item and royalties, there is always the temptation to make the design such as to be patentable rather than to be good.

There is a passage from the *Gita* that comes to mind: "Work done with anxiety about results is far inferior to work done in the calm of self-surrender." Anxiety about getting the approval of friends or the community, or about whether it will be patentable, always leads to inferior work.

GINGERICH: So you just stopped patenting chairs?

EAMES: It's unfair to the client if you say, "Don't patent them," so we arrived at the following principle: If the client wants to patent them, that's his problem. If it's to his interest, let him do it, but we will not put any of our effort into twisting the thing so that it's patentable. There are some surprising corollaries. When some of the blatant copies arrived, patent or no patent, they were refused by the government official at the pier just because they *were* detailed copies.

The original chair, the first called "the Eames chair," was molded plywood with very thin metal legs. If you look at any history of modern furniture, it is presented as a classic. It is probably the only chair we ever did that got the amount of attention, from us, that it deserved. The first imitations of the molded plastic shell that appeared in this country horrified the Herman Miller Furniture Company. They soon found it in their hearts not to be completely outraged, because each time a copy appeared, the sales of the original went up!

GINGERICH: Your most famous chair is very widely copied.

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EAMES: The chair of which you speak, the black leather, down-stuffed lounge chair, I have never considered as good a solution as the other one, although it has apparently given a lot of pleasure to people. It has a sort of ugliness to it. I take a certain comfort in the fact that Picasso pointed out through Gertrude Stein (in the Alice B. Toklas book) that anything that is truly original must have a touch of ugliness because it has not had a chance to be honed to the elegance that comes with refinement. About ten years ago a German publication published pictures of the original lounge chair and seventy-five different manufactured copies.

GINGERICH: But don't you have to worry about plagiarism?

EAMES: What you really worry about in the design of furniture or in architecture are the *bad* copies, when your idea is used in a kind of booby way. You don't mind if someone carries your idea further in a better way, although at first your nose may be a bit out of joint.

GINGERICH: I suppose that people whose opinions matter to you will recognize imitations for what they are. But how can you protect ideas that are still in an embryonic stage?

EAMES: There is a kind of moral patent that is taken out all over the world, within the circles of workers themselves. As you know, Eero Saarinen and I worked very closely together, especially when we were younger. (He died about ten years ago.) In 1939 we won the Organic Competition at the Museum of Modern Art by working on furniture together. As an architect he was known to be very competitive. He was a joy to compete along with, and a terror to compete against. Then Eero continued to design some furniture, and it was distributed by Hans Knoll, while our furniture was distributed by Herman Miller.

It was a healthy situation between us, but Eero would call me up in the middle of the night and would start telling me about a design for a chair he had in mind. He would be very explicit about the design, and then he would go down the list of all possible uses that this design could be put to, anything he could get in verbally to me—and I would be saying, "Don't tell me, I don't want to hear anything about it, I'm hanging up!"—and he would go on reciting this litany of uses, because if he told them to me, that was his moral patent. It's the kind of thing architects still practice. They throw an idea immediately to their friends, especially those who would be their greatest competitors.

GINGERICH: You were mentioning your earlier collaboration with Eero Saarinen. . . .

EAMES: It used to be this way. In the middle of the night, at three o'clock in the morning—and this has something to do with what is known as the creative process—out of despair I would say something like, "If we can't do anything else, let's paint it brown." And then Eero

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would say, "What? Of course we'll make it round. It's obvious that's the solution. Why is it that I'm an idiot? I never thought of it. You take it and see it should be round."

And I say, "Wait a minute, you're mistaken. I just said a dumb thing about it being brown."

"You're always trying to make me feel good. I never have any ideas, you have all the ideas. Why didn't I think of it?"

"But I said 'brown.' "

"Don't give me that crap."

It reminds me of the fellow who reviews books so well that he pulls them up to another level. Then an author reads a review of his book and says, "Did I say that?"

GINGERICH: You said something earlier about the honesty of materials when you were discussing the molding of plywood for chairs. That is the same theme mentioned at the beginning of *Toccata for Toy Trains*, your marvelous film that has many of your antique toys in it.

EAMES: The *Toy Trains* describes the unself-conscious use of materials in making an honest toy: "Tin is tin, what is wood is really wood, and what is cast is often beautifully cast." A toy tin train representing a complex locomotive does not try to make the tin look as though it were wrought iron or riveted plate or whatever. The material speaks for itself.

GINGERICH: From considering yourself an architect to being creative in designing toys—that's quite a wide step. Can you justify toys as miniature architecture?

EAMES: Rather than looking at toys as miniature architecture, I would look at them as miniature science. Much of hydraulics found its way into toys, displays, and tricks before it became a mechanical science. Static electricity went a long way in toys before being developed much as a science.

GINGERICH: Have you ever thought of an exhibit on toys as protoscience?

EAMES: Yes, especially of certain logical and mathematical games. We actually made an exhibit of that nature, although it was not seen by the public—we did it for an IBM training center. We have about thirty mathematical games here—many old, even ancient games.

An exhibit of toys and games can have important uses. Suppose, for example, we were to have an exhibition of sophisticated Japanese painting: the most sophisticated things are, in practice, removed from the primitive and are often exotic to our experience. At the beginning of such an exhibition, we have often thought of having a sort of decompression chamber that would show such toys as we've just described, or other games or ceremonies that are common to our experience. Our view is that if such things were seen before viewing the sophisticated art, and if

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indeed spectators did relate to them, that would be one very important step toward embracing the more sophisticated art.

The conversation thus led to a discussion of the series of exhibitions that the Eames office has designed over the past twenty years, many on mathematical or scientific topics sponsored by IBM. The art and motivation for exhibit making are akin to multimedia productions, a concept invented and pioneered by the Eameses.

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GINGERICH: Multimedia seems to have mushroomed everywhere, like fast food establishments. Do you sometimes think you have opened a Pandora's box?

EAMES: In a word, yes. It's something like the situation about twenty years ago when we thought of using wire technology to create a piece of furniture—wire technology had gone pretty far in terms of shopping center carts and that kind of thing—and so we did some wire furniture. It came back to haunt us, because afterward there was a rash of the kitschiest stuff, and we had to think, "Oh, my God, what have we done?" In some respects this is true of the multimedia.

GINGERICH: Isn't the term "multimedia" something of a misnomer?

EAMES: Yes. In most cases what they're talking about is the production of multiple images; by the same terms, any motion picture would be multimedia because it has both sound and images. The first thing that we did, which was entitled *A Rough Sketch for a Sample Lesson for a Hypothetical Course,* was indeed multimedia. This was in 1950 or 1951. It had not only multiple images, including the relationship between still and motion pictures, but also sensory things—smell and music. We used a lot of sound, sometimes carried to a very high volume so you would actually feel the vibrations. So in the sense that we were introducing sounds, smells, and a different kind of imagery, we were introducing multimedia. We did it because we wanted to heighten awareness.

GINGERICH: Did you introduce the word at that time?

EAMES: No, we were anxious to treat multimedia as a tool and not as a show. The smells were quite effective. They did two things: they came on cue, and they heightened the illusion. It was quite interesting because in some scenes that didn't have smell cues, but only smell suggestions in the script, a few people felt they had smelled things—for example, the oil in the machinery.

GINGERICH: What induced you to try such a show? Were your motivations any different from those of the multiplicity of multimedia we've got now?

EAMES: What has bothered us, if "bothered" is the word, is the frantic use of changing images and an abundance of images for psych-

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edelic effect. The thing that separates our shows from some of the others is that we use multimedia for a very specific reason. In the case of the *Sample Lesson,* we were trying to cram into a short time, a class hour, the most background material possible. George Nelson, Alexander Girard, Ray, and I had been asked by the University of Georgia to make a study of some of the problems of the schools where the students weren't getting a broad enough background for things having to do with a particular discipline. Instead of writing a report, we decided we would pool our fees and put together a show for a typical class. It would supply a very broad range of material upon which the teacher could then base his arguments; in other words, what happened in those fifty minutes would replace a certain amount of deficiency in background, but would leave the teacher free to make the connections.

GINGERICH: What subject did you pick?

EAMES: That's an interesting question. We made it clear that this was just the lesson for this particular day, and for this lesson we picked communications. Later we took out of it the *Communications Primer* for IBM, but that was just one little aspect.

For example, we asked ourselves whether indeed the Chartres Cathedral, as you see it now, a work of art from the past, is really communicating today the same kind of emotional reactions that it did in its time. We tried to evoke—with sound and smells and imagery—the interior of Chartres, what it might have been for an instant during the 1300s, but with the thought of letting the teacher develop the points. The Chartres thing was appropriate because we first presented this show down in Southern Baptist country where the people hadn't ever gotten close to what a fourteenth-century Catholic cathedral might have been.

GINGERICH: I remember very vividly your multi-screen show in the IBM pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair. That can't have been your first public multimedia show, because there were already quite a few other multiple-screen productions at the fair.

EAMES: The first large, broadly seen show was the one we did in Moscow in 1959, at the time of the Nixon kitchen debate. There our purpose for the multimedia was quite different. We had the very difficult problem of making the first statement from this country to the Soviet Union since the Russian Revolution. There had been no major statement from people to people until that time. We had to be very careful of what we did. We knew that words had their limitations; they could be used to the point of being almost without effect, certainly without the effect that we would intend to provide. We knew that some images were well known to the Russians. If, for example, we were to show a freeway interchange, somebody would look at it and say, "We have one at

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Smolensk and one at Minsk; we have two, they have one"—that kind of thing. So we conceived the idea of having the imagery come on in multiple forms, as in the *Rough Sketch for a Sample Lesson.*

GINGERICH: But it wasn't so much for information as for credibility?

EAMES: We wanted to have a credible number of images, but not so many that they couldn't be scanned in the time allotted. At the same time, the number of images had to be large enough so that people wouldn't be exactly sure how many they had seen. We arrived at the number seven. With four images, you always knew there were four, but by the time you got up to eight images you weren't quite sure. They were very big images—the width across four of them was half the length of a football field.

GINGERICH: There is something so ephemeral about such a show. If someone had seven projectors and a wide wall, would it be possible to put it on again?

EAMES: We salvaged one set of prints, and we have a very crude composite. Elmer Bernstein wrote a marvelous musical score for it, and it was quite an emotional thing. Theoretically, it was a statement made by our State Department, and yet we did it entirely here and it was never seen by anyone from our government until they saw it in Moscow. It was a little touchy, but one of those things. If you ask for criticism, you get it. If you don't, there is a chance everyone will be too busy to worry about it.

GINGERICH: There is something intrinsically different about how your chairs are preserved compared to the multimedia shows. Someone can see your chairs in the Museum of Modern Art or the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, for example, but the IBM show from the New York Fair can't be reexperienced with any ease.

EAMES: That's true. The fair itself falls into the category of the temporary triumphal arch, which is burned after it is used.

GINGERICH: Like Christo's art. . .

EAMES: The Christo experience, or a good birthday cake. There is great value in how the thing disappears and can't be reproduced; it can't deteriorate and grow passé.

GINGERICH: Nowadays the multimedia techniques have been so widely copied and developed that it's impossible to think of a world without multiple projections in it.

EAMES: After you have made one multiple-image show, you're like a little boy who has been given a hammer—everything he encounters needs hammering! There is a tendency to apply your new system everywhere. But initially the multiple imagery had to perform very specific functions. In the IBM pavilion, for example, it was simultaneity. I think this is a very valuable device: to use multiple images to relate simultane-

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ous happenings to the main theme. You get a feeling about relationships you didn't have previously. In thinking about decision making in the future—whether it be recombinant DNA or what have you—we believe some attention should be given to honing the techniques of showing critical things simultaneously. We had hoped that by now this might be a rather general procedure. I still think it's a good idea.

GINGERICH: I gather you feel that a lot of multimedia has lost sight of honest goals.

EAMES: In certain cases you don't mind that, if the thing has unity. Someone can switch goals and still do a good thing. But there are gray areas: shows may take on the trappings of information but not be really informative. These are the things that are disturbing. When information is not the goal, you often get an arbitrary cutting from image to image. In planning the Moscow show, we tried out various tricks and rhythms in changing the images. We discovered that if you had seven images and changed one of them, this put an enormously wasteful, noninformative burden on the brain, because with every change the eye had to check every image to see which one had changed. When you're busy checking, you don't absorb information. Franticness of cutting tends to degenerate the information quality. We have always been committed to information; it's not a psychedelic scene in any way.

Like their multimedia shows, the Eames's exhibitions have been committed to information. A series of exhibits made originally for the IBM display room on Madison Avenue has included the "Computer Wall," "Copernicus," "On the Shoulders of Giants," and "Newton." A much larger exhibition, made in connection with the American bicentennial, is "The World of Franklin and Jefferson." Originally installed in Paris, it has subsequently been seen in Warsaw, London, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Mexico City. It combines a certain number of original artifacts and art objects with an immense number of photographs and extensive captions.

GINGERICH: Am I correct in thinking that much of the criticism of the "Franklin and Jefferson" show in the Metropolitan Museum arose from the fact that critics and some museum people are just unfamiliar with the idea of high information content in a museum setting?

EAMES: That may be true, but the reaction came as a surprise because the reception at the Louvre was so different—we opened at the Grand Palais, but it is under the same jurisdiction as the Louvre. There they recognized that they had both the material and the whole world of scholarship surrounding the material. Curators have access to complicated information about their objects, but often they have resisted

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including information with the material or showing any view of the setting from which the objects have been taken. I think it's still difficult for them to take that step, but at the Louvre they were terribly interested and a whole group of curators was brought to the exhibition. I went back later and talked with them again because of their seeing this as a real problem: the commitment of the scholarly community to the visitors at large. In any event, they were not thrown by it; but, much to our surprise, in New York the art community as well as some of the curators *were* completely thrown.

GINGERICH: Do you feel that the intentions of the "Franklin and Jefferson" show were somehow misinterpreted?

EAMES: To avoid this very thing, we advertised the exhibition not as a show for historians (even though we owed very much to the historians) but as a citizens' exhibition. Actually it was not an art exhibition, but more like a colored walk-through tabloid. We tried to make this purpose clear.

We used the captions to deal with problems and circumstances; that's why there were so many words. Had we been dealing with accomplishments, we could have done it in very few words. However, it is true that we set out originally to be quite critical and hard about the main characters, but as we went on, we were so impressed by how much someone like James Madison was able to pull off time and again that we came out pretty much all admiration.

We could, for example, have talked about Franklin's seemingly ribald verse or his essay on farting. In a sense, Franklin was doing the same thing as Jonathan Swift, except that Swift did it a hell of a lot better. Franklin was trying everything—it was part of his lifelong experimenting—but in these writings he tried something that wasn't very good. It seemed rather pointless to dwell on it when there was so much new we hadn't seen before, and so much we wanted to tell—for example, about Madison and Washington. Quite frankly, we swung over to what they managed to accomplish, not in an attempt to cover anything up but to show the importance of some of their ideas.

GINGERICH: Wasn't there criticism that the show was too "beautiful" to represent a wartime revolutionary movement?

EAMES: Yes, and we found this a little surprising, too, in light of the way the show was received in Paris. They saw it as a *celebration*, which was what we intended. We meant it to be colorful, but not garish. In Paris they perceived it as a celebration of that time when the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment was meeting up with American immediacy.

GINGERICH: They were prepared to think of the American Revolution in philosophical terms?

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EAMES: Yes, absolutely. Then when the exhibit came back to the United States in 1976, we still thought of it as a celebration; but now what was uppermost as a quality that needed to be celebrated was the robust *continuity* in these people's lives—Franklin, Jefferson, and their whole circle. No discontinuity between their personal interests, their work, their public actions, their pleasures, and their passions.

GINGERICH: But what was the reaction of the American critics to all this?

EAMES: They didn't attack the content: that was almost disappointing to us, in a way. What was attacked—by the *New York Times* art critic, and then by a Chicago art critic quoting him—was the nature of the show itself, because it wasn't a real art exhibition. It was an architectural arrangement of words and photographs, with pockets of real things from the eighteenth century, chosen to reinforce the story. And apparently there's a fairly strong school of thought which says that only original, authentic art works have any business in the Met.

Then I believe also that it was seen as an intrusion on the museum by the sponsor—more than, say, a show of paintings sponsored by a big corporation would be. Maybe they felt that because there was a story, and IBM had paid for it, it must somehow be IBM talking—which was not at all the case, as you know.

I really don't know *why* a critic would be so defensive of the sacred enclosure around Art—I don't believe most good practicing artists would worry about this. We've always thought of the Met as a cultural history establishment, at least as much as an art museum. Think of all that great Egyptian stuff they have; it's not all fine art, or even applied art; some of it is just the equipment of everyday life. Also the Met, by its charter, has a commitment to offer information, not just to confront the visitor with objects. Certainly Charles Willson Peale in *his* museum didn't separate these two functions. He used his own paintings to give information: this is what Mr. So-and-so looked like; this is how the mastodon was dug up.

GINGERICH: Was there an objection to your using photographs rather than real objects?

EAMES: Naturally, there's never been any question for us of *substituting* photographs or words or film for the experience of real things. I don't think anybody who's visited the office could suspect us of that. In a ten-minute film we made for the Metropolitan we talked, among other things, about a small show of close-up photographs "that may help the eye to slow down when it comes to, say, a small sculpture at its real scale in the gallery." And we showed as an example the Rospigliosi cup, which at first glance is kind of uncongenial, I suppose, to many people's taste today. But if you're first exposed to enlarged details of that fine goldsmith's work and enameling, and the elegant profile of the statuette on

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top—her face is no bigger than my thumbnail—and if those images go by quite fast, then, when you come to the real thing, you're liable to think "now I can *really* see that." It's also true, though, that you can get satiated from too many juicy color pictures, especially if they just sit there.

I think it's easy to forget that art historians, in practice, are working with reproductions most of the time, in their research and in teaching. An art historian or a curator, comparing a drawing that's in the Louvre with another in New York, is not thinking all the time about the unique aesthetic impact of the original, he's counting dentils or something. If his photograph is sharp enough for that, he's content. But the layman, or the freshman, attending that scholar's lecture, hasn't seen so many original drawings. He has to take a lot on trust, very often. Unless the teacher really tries to see that his slides are as good as possible, he's letting down his own discipline as well as his audience.

Maybe I'm jaundiced, but I find that many people whose subject has to do with visual aesthetics aren't visually literate when it comes to presentation. They don't extend their critical training to their own work as communicators. As long as audiences are looking at things through other means, what they get ought to be as informative as possible. And informative includes good-looking.

GINGERICH: I'm afraid we've grown accustomed to the idea that art museums are just repositories for aesthetic objects.

EAMES: I think that today our growing institutions have a growing commitment to give cogent information. I feel that anything that can be done to put art objects in their context without detracting from their rich qualities is helpful. Unlike Keats, who said that knowing about the rainbow shatters its beauty, I feel that knowledge about an object can only enrich your feeling for the object itself.

As far as I'm concerned, the ultimate use of any of these experiences is to plow them back into the business of life itself. What I find frustrating in some cases is that the presentation of exhibition material perpetuates and widens the gap between what is in the museum and what is the business of life for the viewer. To me this discontinuity is an outrageous thing; it is what we would like to dispel.

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Welcome Back from the Raft, Huck Honey!

KENNETH S. LYNN

NO NOVEL EVER SEDUCED A WOMAN, as the defense lawyers for sleazy publishing houses used to say, and if there is any man in America who would deny the wisdom of this remark, I have yet to meet him. On the other hand, novels profoundly affect our sense of the possibilities of life, as do professional interpreters of novels, most of whom are teachers of the impressionable young. In the awkward but on-target words of John Dewey: "The union that is presented in perception persists in the remaking of impulsion and thought. The first intimations of wide and large redirections of desire and purpose are of necessity imaginative." Novels, like all works of the imagination, are modes of prediction that insinuate visions of human relations not to be found in official rules or precepts or admonitions.

By all odds, the most insinuating, the most seductive, of American novels is *Huckleberry Finn*—partly because of the enormous influence the book has had on our twentieth-century writers. Consider Hemingway's tribute: "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*." But the main reason why the book has come to play such a major role in the life of the mind in America is that students repeatedly run into it in the course of their formal education. They read it, usually for the first time, in a high school English class. Then they read it again during their freshman year in college, in a general education course entitled something like "The Hero in Western Thought." If, as sophomores, they elect to take the survey course in American literature, they unquestionably will be asked to read it once more. I know students who claim to have encountered the novel on half a dozen different reading lists, starting as far back as the seventh grade and extending into graduate school.

What's wrong with a literary masterpiece being popular? The lonesome poetry of the novel's vernacular style, the beautifully tender relationship that develops between the boy and the black man, Huck's unforgettable description of a sunrise on the river, the tall-tale humor of the episodes involving the King and the Duke, the piercing insights into

KENNETH S. LYNN, professor of history at the Johns Hopkins University, is the author of *Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor*.

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the seamy aspects of antebellum southern life—why am I upset because American students are repeatedly being exposed to these marvelous things? The trouble lies not in the novel, but in its interpreters. In March 1885, the Library Committee of Concord, Massachusetts, banned *Huckleberry Finn* from its shelves on the grounds that the book was "trash and suitable only for the slums"; ninety-two years later, I am here to state that the only trash connected with *Huckleberry Finn* is what emanates from the teachers thereof. In the classrooms of this country, students are being seduced—perhaps "poisoned" is a better word—by an antisocial vision of human relations that Mark Twain himself did not formulate. How this corrupt redirection of desire and purpose affects youthful minds ought to concern us all.

The misinterpretation of *Huckleberry Finn* originated in the 1950s, largely as a result of the misreadings of its famous final sentences: "But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before." By 1958, the situation had become so bad that Professor Henry Nash Smith, the nation's foremost authority on Mark Twain, was moved to write an essay pointing out how completely we were distorting the author's intentions. (I say "we" because, sad to relate, I was one of those many misinterpreters of the 1950s. I believe that most of what I have written about Mark Twain still stands up, but about the ending and a number of other matters in his greatest book I was wrong.) Professor Smith's effort to make us pay attention to the facts of the case is worth quoting at length:

> But when [at the end of the book] the Evasion from the Phelps plantation under Tom Sawyer's leadership restores the mood of the opening chapters, Huck's desire to escape is stripped of the meaning it had acquired in the middle section of the book. We are brought back to the situation at the end of *Tom Sawyer*. Even the robber gang reappears, for Tom's imagination peoples the territory with robbers in his "nonnamous letters" of warning. It is Tom, again, who conceives the plan to "go for howling adventures amongst the Injuns, over in the Territory, for a couple of weeks or two." When Huck says he means to set out ahead of the others, there is nothing in the text to indicate that his intention is more serious than Tom's.
>
> This reading of Huck's last sentence contradicts a view that has been gaining in popularity among critics, a view which sees a portentous meaning in Huck's final escape on the theory that he has become disgusted with a society that tolerates slavery and is making a drastic, final gesture of alienation and rejection.

Smith's corrective words never had a chance of carrying the day, for he was pitted against a crowd of clever writers that grew in number with every passing year. Soon their new consensus was being accepted as gospel truth by high school and college teachers all across the country.

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For almost twenty years now, what might be termed the Dropoutsville interpretation of *Huckleberry Finn* has been rammed into the minds of American students.

Yet, as Professor Smith tried in vain to tell us, Huck Finn at the end of the novel is most emphatically *not* planning to exile himself from organized society. In lighting out for the Territory he is merely going along with Tom Sawyer's latest disappearance-reappearance act. Tom and Huck will take Nigger Jim—who has been freed in the will of his now-dead owner—"back up home on a steamboat, in style, and pay him for his lost time, and write word ahead and get out all the niggers around, and have them waltz him into town with a torchlight procession and a brass band, and then he would be a hero, and so would we." As Huck later tells us in the sequel called *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, the gaudy scheme is carried out exactly as Tom planned it: "You see, when we three came back up the river in glory, as you may say, from that long travel, and the village received us with a torchlight procession and speeches, and everybody hurrah'd and shouted, it made us heroes, and that was what Tom Sawyer had always been hankering to be."

At the end of *Huckleberry Finn*, therefore, students should be asked what sort of life Huck will lead when he returns to St. Petersburg, rather than encouraged to conjure up misleading fantasies about a young boy's continuing search for freedom and self-realization in the tabula rasa of the Territory. Since the question takes us beyond the limits of the story, the severe holistic standards of some literary critics might forbid it. In reality, though, the question takes us directly back into *Huckleberry Finn*, and into *Tom Sawyer* as well. Moreover, it spotlights the curiously overlooked character of the Widow Douglas, and thereby throws into even higher relief the anti-institutional ideas that teachers of American literature are preaching to students.

Potentially, the Widow Douglas, "fair, smart, and forty," is the most interesting female character Mark Twain ever created. We meet her for the first time in *Tom Sawyer*. The house she occupies atop beautiful Cardiff Hill, "the only palace in town," symbolizes her social position in the St. Petersburg community. As hospitable as she is intelligent, this aristocratic lady gives parties that are "the most lavish . . . that St. Petersburg could boast." Her generosities, furthermore, are not limited to her gentry friends or to people of her own age. So far as we know, the Widow herself is childless, but she likes and understands boys and girls all the same, and encourages them to come see her. It is only natural that Tom Sawyer should suggest to Becky Thatcher that they "climb right up the hill and stop at the Widow Douglas'. She'll have ice-cream! She has it most every day—dead loads of it. And she'll be awful glad to have us." Even Huckleberry Finn, the juvenile pariah of the village, son of the

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town drunkard and an illiterate woman long since dead, with whom the middle-class mothers of St. Petersburg have forbidden their children to associate, has "more than once" been befriended by the Widow. In all likelihood she has fed him when he was hungry, for Huck's principal complaint about the anarchic life he leads is that "I don't ever get enough to eat, gen'ally."

One dark night, on the edge of the Widow's estate, Huck overhears the dreaded Injun Joe vow to a criminal companion that before leaving St. Petersburg for good he is going to slit the Widow's nostrils and notch her ears like a sow, in revenge for being jugged as a vagrant and publicly horsewhipped by order of the Widow's late husband, who had been the town's justice of the peace. Although Huck fears he will be murdered if Injun Joe should discover who has informed on him, he immediately plunges down the hillside to warn a sturdy townsman and his sons that the Widow is in peril. All Huck asks for himself is that his own role in the affair be kept secret from everyone, including the Widow. "Please don't ever tell *I* told you," Huck begs the man. "Please don't—I'd be killed, sure—but the widow's been good friends to me sometimes, and I want to tell—I *will* tell if you'll promise you won't ever say it was me." The man promises, and Huck spills out his story.

Thus it is out of no special feeling of gratitude to Huck that the Widow Douglas volunteers to nurse the homeless boy when, a short time later, he falls deliriously ill with fever. Her willingness to take charge of him possibly saves his life, because all the doctors in town, along with all the other able-bodied men, are off at McDougal's cave looking for Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher, who are lost in its uncharted depths. In contrast to the disdainful attitudes of the other women of St. Petersburg, the Widow's feeling about Huck is that "whether he was good, bad, or indifferent, he was the Lord's, and nothing that was the Lord's was a thing to be neglected." Her Christianity, in other words, is a living faith, not an ossified piety.

In towns the size of St. Petersburg, secrets do not keep for long. Eventually, the Widow learns who had saved her from the Indian's revenge. From this revelation flows her decision "to give Huck a home under her roof and have him educated; and . . . when she could spare the money she would start him in business in a modest way." Huck accepts the Widow's offer—but with a deep sense of unease. After all, his only recollection of family life is an early childhood memory of the constant quarreling between his father and mother: "Fight! Why, they used to fight all the time." Since his mother's death, Huck's drunken father has simply let the boy run wild. The boy has worn the cast-off clothes of grown men, slept on doorsteps in fine weather and in empty hogsheads in wet, and avoided soap and water like the plague. He smokes and

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chews tobacco. He swears "wonderfully." He has never been to church or to school, and cannot recognize the letters of the alphabet.

In the last episode of *Tom Sawyer,* we witness this child being "introduced . . . no, dragged" into society. The Widow's servants keep him neat and clean. He has to eat with a knife and fork. He has to sleep in "unsympathetic sheets that had not one little spot or stain which he could press to his heart and know for a friend." He is required to go to church and to cut out swearing. Plans are afoot to send him to school, as soon as the new term begins. "Whithersoever he turned, the bars and shackles of civilization shut him in and bound him hand and foot." After three weeks of misery, he runs off. Finally Tom Sawyer locates him, stretched at ease in an empty hogshead down behind an abandoned slaughterhouse, smoking a pipe, clad in rags, and superbly uncombed. Tom understands the feelings of his friend—and yet loves him enough to give him advice he knows Huck doesn't want to hear. Go back to the Widow's, Tom urges him; "if you'll try this thing just a while longer you'll come to like it." Huck adamantly refuses.

In the long run, however, Huck is no match for the master manipulator who once had persuaded all the boys in St. Petersburg to whitewash a fence for him. Thinking fast, Tom tells Huck he is going to form a "high-toned" robber gang, of the sort that in most European countries is made up of "dukes and such." In order to keep up the tone of his gang, Tom will restrict its membership to respectable boys. Returning to the Widow is the price Huck will have to pay for belonging. Upon hearing this, Huck's resistance collapses. "I'll stick to the widder till I rot," Huck declares, as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* draws to a close, "and if I git to be a reg'lar ripper of a robber, and everybody talking 'bout it, I reckon she'll be proud she snaked me in out of the wet."

With that sentence Mark Twain set the stage for a follow-up novel that could have become one of the most extraordinary studies of acculturation in modern literature, centering on a psychological contest between an emotionally deprived juvenile outcast and a smart, attractive, still youthful woman. Somewhere along the line, though, Mark Twain decided he had a better idea. The sequel to *Tom Sawyer* became a story about a runaway boy and a runaway slave, rafting down the big river on the June rise.

It was a marvelous idea. Yet by making Huck Finn his runaway hero, Mark Twain created certain problems for himself. The conventional wisdom about the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is that the novel lets its readers down only in the long final episode at the Phelps plantation, when Tom Sawyer reenters the story and, with his romantic schemes, effectively destroys the emotional connection between Huck and Jim.

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Hemingway, for example, qualified his tribute to the novel by adding, "If you read it you must stop where the Nigger Jim is stolen from the boys. That is the real end. The rest is just cheating." As bad as cheating, however, are the incidents that occur at the outset of the story, in the chapters dealing with Huck's life at the Widow's.

The first problem Mark Twain confronted was how to blur his readers' awareness that Huck and the Widow are bound together by mutual feelings of gratitude, that they both are warmhearted, and that their experiment in living as symbolic son and mother has a chance of succeeding. Since *Huckleberry Finn* was to be a story of rafting on the river, the author had to spring Huck free from his ties to the Widow. Mark Twain solved this problem—if one can call a travesty a solution—by introducing, on page two, the cartoon character of Miss Watson. "A tolerable slim old maid with goggles on," Miss Watson is the Widow's sister, who has just recently—oh, yes, very recently!—come to live in the Douglas mansion. It is altogether incredible that the Widow would surrender the bulk of her parental responsibilities to this two-dimensional caricature of old-maid prissiness and henpecking tyranny, but that is exactly what Mark Twain was forced to ask us to believe. The richly interesting psychological drama that seemed to be promised to us at the end of *Tom Sawyer* is reduced in the first three chapters of *Huckleberry Finn* to a series of farcical confrontations between Huck and old Goggle Eyes, with the gentle, understanding Widow coming on stage only now and again.

As if embarrassed by the baldness of this stratagem, Mark Twain admits at the beginning of chapter 4 that after four months in the same household Huck and the Widow have grown somewhat closer together, and that Huck is "getting sort of used" to her ways, albeit he still prefers his former habits. For her part, the Widow believes that Huck is coming along slowly but surely and is doing very satisfactorily, thank you. Almost immediately, however, the reason why Mark Twain could afford this outburst of literary candor is revealed: he had hit upon a legalistic means of removing Huck from the Widow's jurisdiction, once and for all. No matter that in the course of executing this maneuver the author would have to resort to a few "stretchers," as Huck would say.

Pap Finn has been missing from town for more than a year. Now, suddenly, he returns. He has heard about Huck's and Tom's discovery (in *Tom Sawyer*) of a buried treasure of golden coins. Huck's share, which comes to six thousand dollars, has been banked for him by the Widow at 6 percent interest. Pap claims that as Huck's father he should be given control of the six thousand dollars, and swears he will go to court about it. In the face of this threat, the Widow and the influential Judge Thatcher ask the court to take Huck away from his father and

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appoint one of them the boy's legal guardian. Confronted on one side of his courtroom by the Widow and Judge Thatcher, and on the other side by Pap Finn—"His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines. . . . There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl"—what would any judge do?

But let us not ask the question only in moral terms. Let us also speak of clout. St. Petersburg is a small southern town, whose power structure stands before the judge in the persons of the Widow and Judge Thatcher. The power structure's adversary is the trashiest white for miles around, a man totally without influence. How will the judge rule? Mark Twain knows damned well, yet he has no choice but to lie to us. "It was a new judge," the novel lamely explains, "that had just come, and he didn't know. . . ." After ruling in favor of Huck's father, the judge invites Pap to his home, and persuades him to take a temperance pledge. The presumably reformed drunkard then goes to bed in the judge's guest room. Sometime during the night he sneaks out, buys a jug of forty-rod, sneaks back in, kills the jug, "and towards daylight he crawled out again, drunk as a fiddler, and rolled off the porch and broke his left arm in two places and . . . when they come to look at that spare room, they had to take soundings before they could navigate it." Does the judge, first thing in the morning, grant the Widow a temporary injunction against the enforcement of his previous ruling, until a new trial on the guardianship question can be scheduled? Don't be silly.

Consequently, when Pap snatches Huck one day in the spring, takes him across the river to the Illinois shore, and locks him up in an old log hut, the Widow has no legal right to recover him. Some weeks later, Pap comes storming into the cabin on one of his irregular visits and reports that there are rumors floating around St. Petersburg that the Widow is about to make a second effort in the court. But by this time Huck has completely reverted to his old ways, and doesn't want to be "cramped up and sivilized" any more. He has also long since decided that he has no desire to go on living with his nightmarish Pap. Thus, on the day he breaks out of the cabin and makes for the river, Huck is fleeing first of all from his father, which is entirely understandable. But much less understandable is that he is also fleeing from all his boyhood friends, including the woman who had befriended him off and on throughout his childhood, had nursed him through a dangerous illness, had invested his money for him rather than mulcting him out of it, had supplied him with bed and board and loving understanding for four months, and had sent him to school so that he could learn to read and write. Can it be that we have been wrong in thinking that Huck Finn is a warmhearted boy—

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that in fact he is a cold-blooded little bastard who doesn't really care about the people who care about him? Of course not. It is simply that Mark Twain had to turn Huck into a runaway, and he could not do so without temporarily violating the consistency of his hero's character.

The point of this analysis is not to downgrade Mark Twain's literary reputation by exposing the social and psychological implausibilities in the early chapters of his masterpiece. Implausibilities, after all, were Mark Twain's stock in trade, in every book he ever wrote. The point, rather, is that teachers of *Huckleberry Finn* read every detail in the early chapters with a deadly literal-mindedness. Partly this is because a lot of professional interpreters of literature lack a sense of humor. But mainly they misread the beginning of *Huckleberry Finn* because of what appears to be their desire to denigrate American family life. Instead of showing students that the account of Huck's life at the Widow's is not to be taken seriously—that it is simply a series of chess moves designed to get Huck onto that raft with Nigger Jim as rapidly as possible, and that it most certainly does not reflect Mark Twain's real opinion of the Widow Douglas—they take the account at face value, in preparation for their Dropoutsville misreading of the novel's final sentences. In the last twenty years I have, as an observer, sat in on many classes that were discussing *Huckleberry Finn*, and in all but a handful the teacher has spoken of Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas in the same breath, as a double-headed symbol of familial suffocation.

Back in the 1950s, when this whole mess started, literary critics were moved to misread *Huckleberry Finn* for a variety of reasons. To its everlasting credit, American society in the postwar period gradually came to the conclusion—first in the area of sports, but raying out from there into other aspects of our national life—that the ancient pattern of discrimination against Negroes was morally and legally indefensible. This conclusion precipitated numerous misinterpretations of *Huckleberry Finn*. Critics wanted to believe that Huck was renouncing his membership in a society that condoned slavery because they themselves did not wish to live in a segregationist America. A less palatable concomitant of this truth is that some misreaders were as strongly motivated by a distaste for southern whites as by a sympathy for southern blacks. "Anti-southernism is the anti-Semitism of the liberals": the familiar wisecrack may have lost some of its force since last autumn's presidential election. Nevertheless a prejudice against the mores, the manners, and the drawling accents of white southerners still exists in this country, particularly among the highly educated; and a number of literary critics have always been pleased to think that Huck Finn is heading west for keeps because he can't stand all those funny-talking white folks who live along the banks of the southern half of the Mississippi.

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Still another reason why the Dropoutsville interpretation of *Huckleberry Finn* became popular when it did was that the suddenly affluent America of the postwar era was interested above all else in the instant gratification of its desires. We had suffered through years of economic depression and global war, and now we wanted all restraints on our pleasure seeking to be removed at once. As a result, we experienced a particularly grave case of Freudian discomfort at having to continue to live in a framework of civilized repressions, and kicked violently against it. Our drive to escape responsibility was revealed in our extravagant enthusiasm for runaway novels like Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, Kerouac's *On the Road*, and Updike's *Rabbit, Run*. Postwar America also hired Dr. Spock as its collective pediatrician, and then willfully misread his book—at least, a great many of his readers did—so that in the popular mind the good doctor's advice about easing up on the traditional rules of child rearing was transformed into a philosophy of total permissiveness. Millions of parents embraced it at once, since taking the trouble to discipline one's children ate into one's precious pleasure time. Thus, the literary critics who went so far as to say that Huck Finn is not only cutting his ties with civilization at the end of the book, but is destined to have a ball once he has disappeared into the Territory, were endorsing the widespread cultural fantasy that self-realization could not be achieved without turning one's back on obligation.

That *Huckleberry Finn* continues to be misinterpreted in the classrooms of this country is a sign that the antisocial values of the postwar era still flourish in the mid-1970s. Daniel Patrick Moynihan observed a few months ago that in our most fashionable centers of culture, family life is represented as dreary, repressive, and conducive to the sickness, rather than the health, of husbands and wives, parents and children. The only thing wrong with this statement is that in restricting his accusation to "fashionable centers of culture," Senator Moynihan is asking us to concern ourselves with the small tip of a very large iceberg. Not merely in certain sophisticated circles in New York, Washington, Chicago, and San Francisco, but in high schools in Minnesota and New Mexico, community colleges in Maryland and Colorado, and universities of every description in every section of the country, destructive attacks on American family life are being mounted every day. And one of the stalking-horses employed in these attacks is *Huckleberry Finn*.

Mark Twain would be very uncomfortable if he knew this. In private life he was a devoted parent who not only believed in the importance of close family ties, but delighted in them. As the author of *Huckleberry Finn*, to be sure, he showed another side of his personality, the side that wanted to kick free of all social restraints. Yet at the end of the book, he not only tried to tell us that Huck was planning to return to St. Peters-

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burg, but he showed signs of feeling ashamed of himself for relegating the strong and admirable Widow Douglas to a minor role in her own household. In the final chapters, as the loose threads of the story are hastily being gathered up, we learn that Miss Watson, the erstwhile owner of Nigger Jim and persecutor of small white boys, is dead. We also learn that Pap Finn is dead. But what about the Widow Douglas? Amidst all the questions and answers that are flying about, she is never once mentioned. Even in the final sentences, in which Huck says he had tried being adopted and civilized once before, he does not pronounce the name of the woman who had done so much for him throughout his life.

The best face I can put on this strange—indeed disgraceful—literary lapse is that Mark Twain could not bear to summon up the memory of the Widow because he felt guilty about her. Mark Twain, a tortured man, often felt guilty, and on this occasion, I would argue, he had good reason, even though the exigencies of his story left him with no other choice than to mistreat the lady.

Students in this country ought to be told more about the Widow Douglas than they now know. They also ought to be told that at the end of the book Huck is planning to go back home, and that the raft is only a memory. For novels are modes of prediction that insinuate visions of human relations not to be found in official rules or precepts or admonitions. As such, they exert an incalculable social influence, especially on young people. Some day soon, I hope, teachers of *Huckleberry Finn* will decide to tear up their yellowing lecture notes and read the book, along with their students, with fresh eyes.

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Four Snapshots of Aunt Claire

John Dickson

ONE

The trees have sloughed off their night,
the darkness has faded from the waist-high wheat
and she, her cells still splitting into ripening curves,
stands pristine and pubic in the soiled dress
that the wind presses against her thighs.
Notice her eyes—her eyes are the same.
And her posture—
how she carried herself very straight and correct
even then when the camera locked her
into that gray morning.

TWO

Here she has not yet married Albert,
but suspects that she will.
He has caught her as she half sits, half lies
under the trees where they have had
their sandwiches and wine.
The day is washed by a quiet green,
though a few large rocks look like folds of brown denim.
The line of her haunched hip
is like a branch heavy with fruit.
The fullnesses of her blouse
are like the rounded bottle beside her.
Except for her clothes she is the world's first woman.
Being a man basic in his needs,
Albert always carried this picture
of food and Claire and the cupola of leaves.

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THREE

They stand unsmiling, almost austere.
The pulse of money and the lack of it
has corroded their faces and wrenched them apart
until now their marriage has turned to estrangement.
Her abandoned breasts are screaming to heaven
and he longs to fall drunk on the wet grass.
They have forgotten
the laughing scramble they made for their clothes
when a twig snapped in the forest
and the sight of kissing or the touching of faces
has become for them an embarrassing thing.

FOUR

Her life with Albert
has been wrapped and labeled and stored away.
Now she is self-sufficient,
floats little roses in saucers of water
and walks to work with a quick step.
The habit of smiling has brightened her face
but her eyes have a nunlike acquiescence
that lets nothing arouse her loneliness—
not the room she comes home to
nor the wind that blows at the curtains
nor the young girls laughing down in the street.

JOHN DICKSON's poems and short stories have been published in a number of magazines, anthologies, and textbooks. He is a member of the Chicago Board of Trade and conducts a commodity futures trading business there.

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Feared Drowned

SHARON OLDS

Suddenly nobody knows where you are,
your suit black as seaweed, your bearded
head slick as a seal's.

Somebody watches the kids. I walk down the
edge of the water, clutching the towel
like a widow's shawl around me.

None of the swimmers is just right.
Too short, too heavy, clean-shaven,
they rise out of the surf, the water
rushing down their shoulders.

Rocks stick out near shore like heads.
Kelp snakes in like a shed black suit
and I cannot find you.

My stomach begins to contract as if to
vomit salt water

when up the beach toward me comes
a man who looks very much like you,
his beard matted like beach-grass, his suit
dark as a wet shell against his body.

Coming closer, he turns out
to be you—or nearly.
Once you lose someone it is never exactly
the same person who comes back.

SHARON OLDS teaches poetry at the Herzl Institute. Her poems have appeared in a number of magazines.

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The Organization Man

RALPH WHITEHEAD, JR.

Richard J. Daley could be a hard man to understand because he chose to express himself almost solely through an organization, Chicago's political machine. He never created an obvious or convenient body of his work, not even one as slight and as ghost-written as other politicians so often leave: a memoir or a book on the issues, say, or some formal addresses, or a major piece of legislation. If all his public papers were gathered together, they would amount to little more than the short talks he gave at ribbon cuttings.

Daley's friends and enemies alike did try to point to the places where his personal touch might seem evident—his neighborhood, perhaps, or the Chicago skyline—but they were only clutching at conceits. Others knew him by the hard lines he chose to draw as the rest of America watched him: his cautious opposition to the Chicago civil rights campaign led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, or his brutal opposition to the protests at the Democratic National Convention in 1968. These cases, and the impression they create of Daley as a narrow and autocratic man, must be taken into account, of course; but his public life was too long to be measured by their evidence alone. To list him simply as the last of the big city bosses, as the headline writers did, not only is a mistake (he was not the last), but also turns a significant politician into a stock character.

Of course, the medium he chose does tend to put off quick or easy judgments. The Chicago Democratic machine is a large organization, for one thing. Through its control of patronage, the machine sponsors more than thirty-five thousand people in jobs, public and private. It is hard to know for sure what even a small fraction of them might be doing at a given time, what kindnesses or cruelties they might be performing. The pattern of their work can also be difficult to follow and comprehend. The machine is broken down into branches for each of Chicago's fifty wards, with a Democratic ward committeeman elected to run each one. The work in the wards is split again into smaller branches—the several dozen voting precincts, where anywhere from five to fifteen party workers are detailed by the machine to handle the four hundred to six hundred voters in a precinct, and through the full year, not just at campaign time. The machine is a single organization—it is commonly known as "*The* Organization" in Chicago—but it can also behave as if it were several different organizations, if only because it crosses lines of race and class and tries to hold the common support of bitter enemies.

Moreover, Mayor Daley did not build his political appeal on his personality. Unlike so many other politicians of the time, he never tried to create and project, for a mass audience, the artifact we call a public image. (He did cultivate a reputation, but he tended to groom it gradually and in detail, a single wake or phone call at a time.) He seemed to know why a majority of the voters in Chicago voted as they did. Many of them, he clearly felt, were less likely to make a consumer's judgment of the personality of a candidate than to vote according to their roots, their class, their address, or the color of their skin.

RALPH WHITEHEAD, JR., is completing a book on the life and politics of his native city, Chicago. He is an assistant professor of journalistic studies in the School of Humanities and Fine Arts at the University of Massachusetts.

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As some voters did come to insist on making a consumer's choice at the polls, he urged them to think of the product as something other than Richard Daley, the man. Look at the record, he would say, or the party's ticket this year, or all the buildings we've put up, or all the fine things your precinct captains are doing for you, or The Organization itself—but he would never ask them to look at him. For a rough-cut man as old as he, it was a plausible approach.

Richard Daley spent the larger share of his time attending to the apparatus of The Organization. He financed it, kept up the size and the morale of its work force, and positioned it on issues in the political life of Chicago, particularly issues of race. Interestingly enough, his work on the apparatus should also be taken as the surest guide we have to the moral character of the man. The political values he honored were the right to a livelihood, security, a place to turn if you get into a jam, and a sense of continuity with the past and the future. He felt these values could survive in the city only if they were secured by the apparatus of the strong and territorial institution he led for almost twenty-five years, with its dollars and people and what in Chicago is called clout. For him, the values and the apparatus were fused, and to work on one was to work on both.

I

The Organization's boss is obliged to finance its work, usually by finding and tapping a prime source of capital. At different times, the leading backers of the machine were the utilities, the real estate boomers of the early 1920s, the legitimate wineries and breweries of the prohibition years, and the racetrack gamblers of the depression and World War II. The ten years before Richard Daley came to power were hard times for the machine. Neither of its successive leaders, Jacob Arvey and Joseph Gill, was able to finance it adequately. Mayor Daley, though, moved quickly to secure a fresh supply of capital, largely through policies of land development.

At the time, Chicago's downtown was stagnating. The investors of the fifties were turning to the cheaper land of the suburbs, and several of the major landholders and commercial interests of the city's business district, the Loop—some of the larger banks, the utilities, the department stores, and the Chicago Title and Trust Company, a major force in the land and lending markets—organized to restore its competitive standing as a business site. The repertoire of urban land policies was broadening. Public housing, slum clearance, neighborhood conservation, and other forms of urban renewal offered new means and new dollars. The proprietors of the Loop thought these public means should be used to renew, expand, and secure the downtown.

As the Mayor, Daley helped them. His reasons for doing so were complex, but it is not misleading to put them into a simplified form: his political organization was desperate for money and would fall apart without it. He saw how the renewal of the Loop could supply it, if the work was properly handled. For one thing, Mayor Daley realized that a major industry in Chicago could be the buying and the selling, the tearing down and the building up, of the city itself, provided The Organization fostered the growth through its control of eminent domain powers, zoning, public subsidies, the building codes, the property tax, and several other kinds of instruments.

Moreover, Daley knew he could establish himself as the leader of this industry. Real estate and construction are highly fragmented industries; even the giant firms hold only a tiny percentage of the total market. A public body as large as Chicago's city government was likely to be the largest single force in the marketplace, as it went about building its firehouses and police stations, its bridges and its viaducts, its curbs and its gutters, its streets and sidewalks. Of course The Organization also controlled other public agencies: the board of education, the Chicago Park District, the Metropolitan Sanitary District, the offices for Cook County, and some of the offices for the state of Illinois. All those schools, fieldhouses, pipe ways and sewage plants, court and office buildings, and miles of expressways could add even more to the machine's leverage in the industry. It was merely a matter of pulling together all these pieces of work into a larger strategy for development, as the Mayor gradually did.

Daley, then, used the renewal of the Loop to get the industry off the ground. The process created a large and steady market for

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land, mortgages, building supplies, construction work, bonding, and other forms of insurance. It created jobs for the skilled trades while the buildings were going up, and, after they were up, more jobs for clerks and janitors. It began to shore up the tax base. (Not for nothing was Richard J. Daley so well regarded by both the unions and business.) It took advantage of public sources of capital, through bond issues and grants by the national government. Within the political machine, there was some resistance to what the Mayor was doing; some of the ward bosses near the Loop were enraged to see their political bases torn up by the work, but progress brushed the old rogues aside. In time, the Loop was secured for private investment, just as the economy began its growth in the early sixties and more and more private dollars became available. Thus the work was taking hold: it proved itself, inspired confidence, and primed the decisions of landowners and investors. Downtown, property values began to rise. The Mayor was creating new wealth.

At the same time, the Democratic machine positioned itself to catch at least a small share of all this new money. The flow of the money varied, depending on its source in the marketplace and its destination within The Organization. The clientele for zoning help learned to befriend the leaders of the city council; the clients for tax breaks turned to the assessor's office; the building trades gladly offered campaign aid to the Mayor himself—in short, a group of what might be called profit centers began to emerge. Some worked within the law and others did not. For example, the indictments of at least six of the executives of The Organization can be traced to these arrangements. Despite the risks, though, the machine as a whole did benefit.

II

Scholars agree on reasons for the decline of Democratic big city machines—slowed-down immigration, the New Deal, and the economic growth begun in World War II—but they often neglect an added influence: the more impersonal forms of persuasion developed in the last thirty years, in politics as well as in the consumer marketplace. The political organizations in New York, Jersey City, Memphis, Kansas City, Cleveland, and, of course, Boston, home of *The Last Hurrah*, were badly hurt by this slow but sweeping change because it undercut the mainstay of the political machine: the precinct worker. Mayor Daley, however, made a conscious decision to keep up his force of precinct workers regardless of the cost.

Just as Richard Daley came to power, the advertising industry began a long campaign to undercut what it called personal selling. Its trade press and other business publications carried arguments against the value and common sense of using salespeople in the stores or on doorsteps—a sales force is susceptible to high turnover, for example, or to trade union sentiments—and tried to show how expensive this method could be, given the rising costs of labor. Far cheaper forms of persuasion were there to be used, the ad agencies said. Standardized brands and brand images made it less necessary for a buyer to seek the advice of a salesperson; impulse buying was occurring more and more; market research could gauge the likes and dislikes of consumers almost as well as salespeople could, and more cheaply; radio and TV could carry sales messages into a home at a lower cost than a door-to-door salesman could. Of course, the ad industry was running advertisements for itself here, but its evidence was sound and its figures held up.

Moreover, a number of major manufacturers were still shifting to an after-Korea peacetime economy, building a consumer market for appliances and other goods to replace the military market for hardware. Soon conventional wisdom advised them to put their sales dollars into the products of Madison Avenue. "Advertising is the finest catalytic agent to keep mass consumption abreast of mass production" said Richard Bowditch, the president of the chamber of commerce. Corporations began to freeze or even cut the size of their sales forces. In the words of E. B. Weiss, a Chicago advertising executive, a columnist for *Printer's Ink*, and the author of *The Vanishing Salesman*: "Make no mistake, we are smack in the middle of a developing era of impersonal mass selling."

Of course, some of these methods came to be used eventually in political campaigns. There, too, capital-intensive forms of persuasion began to undermine the older labor-intensive forms. They proved to be far

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cheaper than the political counterpart to the salesman, the precinct worker. A precinct worker could move around in a single corner of one neighborhood and talk up a candidate and help to spread the man's name around, but a sophisticated marketing strategy could turn a candidate's name into a brand and build his personality into a brand image—and for an entire city. A parallel to impulse buying also emerged as voters began to put off their final voting decision until they could consider the appeals broadcast during the last days of a campaign. Polls brought market research methods into politics. They weren't as savvy as the eye and the ear of a seasoned precinct worker, but they offered scope and efficiency, since they could measure the sentiment of an entire city in only three evenings of phone calls. Advertisements, in the mail or in newspapers, on radio or TV, could carry an appeal into a living room for pennies. The ad budget for a campaign needed to cover only thirty to forty-five days in the election season, but a precinct worker needed to be paid the year round and would be looking for a pension besides. The cost-per-thousand data alone were devastating: a precinct worker would reach perhaps 400 voters, for $7,500-a-year and up, but an advertising spot could address 250,000 voters for a few hundred dollars. The new methods were only half as good as the old, but they were twenty or thirty times cheaper. So efficiency prevailed, but not in Chicago, where Mayor Daley chose to pay the extra price.

Of course, patronage defrays the larger share of the costs of the sales force for The Organization. The government or the utilities or a friendly business firm sends a weekly paycheck to most of the precinct workers, insures their health, and sets aside money for their old age. At the same time, though, patronage salaries are often too low to reward these people for the long hours they spend in political work, in the evenings and on weekends. Many of them want a moonlighter's subsidy, and The Organization goes into its own pocket to pay for it. The workers also piece together what might be called their product line—the goods and services and favors they swap for sure votes on election day. For many of these, they turn to the government; they are the insiders, their calls get returned first, their requests go to the top of the pile, they know or can quickly learn the name of the man to see (often the man to see is a woman) for help with the police, the courts, with welfare, or streets and sanitation, water and sewers, and so on. At the same time, precinct workers provide added help, things the government doesn't do: shovel sidewalks, tune cars, or run to the store for groceries for the sick or elderly. The Organization pays for this, too. It also puts up what it calls precinct money, the small bankroll a worker carries and spends on election day and the few days before. Some of it is used to buy votes outright, for three to five dollars a vote, or to buy the liquor or the cut of meat that will be traded for a vote. (Often the liquor and the beefsteak are contributed by a friendly business.) Some of the money also buys goodwill. If a worker knows a family with six votes, he might hire the grandmother to help on election day; for a ten-dollar bill, she will make sure everybody in the house votes, and votes right. Finally, as a perquisite or as a cushion against fate, workers just like to keep a little cash around. Even the leaders of The Organization cannot say for sure how much money gets spent in its name. Very few records are kept, and they are not set down in a single place, where they can be reviewed. A conservative estimate would put the figure at $3.5 million a year.

With the money on hand, precinct workers can display their natural superiority. The work they do can be highly personal, tailored to people quite carefully and with a sense of ceremony. Their work is also open to ties of friendship and kinship, as well as loyalties based on the neighborhood, the parish, the local faith and culture. Precinct workers can acquire and store a subtle sense of the electorate as well. Few polls, no matter how skillful in design, can discover that the man in the third bungalow from the corner, there on Seventy-seventh Street, is always good for a vote for the alderman because the two of them used to play softball together on Tuesday evenings. Finally, the mere presence of these people can be an advantage. They can look and listen, adapt and manipulate, haggle and persuade. In a sense, they form a medium of a distinctive sort, as Daley appreciated. In the last week of his last campaign, while the other side was attacking him with a strong and sophisticated marketing strategy,

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with six different TV spots and dozens of radio commercials, Mayor Daley told the voters what he thought was at stake: "The next time you need a favor," he defied them, "go ask your television set."

III

After his first two terms as Mayor, Richard Daley shifted his base of support in the city's electorate. The change took almost ten years to complete and his strategy for it was extensive. For example, he shifted his position on a number of issues, groomed a new generation of ward bosses, and saw to the retooling of hundreds of precinct workers. Yet it seemed to be quicker and cruder than it actually was, perhaps because it was based on an explosive element in the city's life—race.

The social base for The Organization was always the oldest third of Chicago, which covered what were known for a long time as the river wards: the slums and working-class neighborhoods close to the industrial flats of the Chicago River. This was the Chicago of Jane Addams, Finley Peter Dunne, Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, Richard Wright, and Nelson Algren; it was the home of Studs Lonigan and Augie March. Here considerations of race and class and culture fused into an almost genetic affinity for the Democratic party. Still, it covered only a third of Chicago's wards, and only a third of its votes. The Democratic machine held a power of citywide and countywide scope only because it carried the votes of its natural base so overwhelmingly—85 percent wasn't uncommon. Usually this was more than enough to offset its customary losses in the outer third of the city. In these wards, the voters were white, Protestant, middle-class or better, homeowners, and suburban in their habits and values. They disdained the advice of precinct workers, if they listened to them at all. They did heed the editorial advice in the newspapers, the *Daily News* and the *Tribune*. Usually, but not always, these wards voted for Republicans. (The parties tended to split the votes in the other third of the city.) Thus, as a rule, with only a few exceptions, Chicago's noted political machine rarely enjoyed the support of more than eighteen or nineteen of the wards in the city. It rested on a narrow base.

Moreover, the racial character of that base was changing. At the end of the war, for example, only two of the river wards held black voting majorities. Eighteen years later, in 1963, as Mayor Daley campaigned for a third term, ten of those wards held black majorities and four more were transitional. In that election, the outer ring of white wards voted against him, three to two. More than half of the Daley vote was cast by blacks. The political boss of the South Side ghetto, Congressman William Dawson, read those numbers as if they were a hand full of aces. He began quietly to bet them, mainly by asking for a large piece of the insurance business that was influenced by The Organization. The Mayor put him off. Instead of conceding the changing shape of the old base, Daley began to establish a new one, in the terra incognita of the outer ring of white wards.

Publicly the Mayor began to play to the white audience on racial issues. Events helped him to define his position. The civil rights movement was emerging in Chicago at just this time. He leaned against it—in a subtle way on some occasions, a harsh way on others. He endorsed the principle of open housing but refused to advance it. He dragged his feet against a court order to build public housing in white neighborhoods and open it to both races. He subtly disavowed a school busing plan drafted by the board of education. After Chicago's fourth ghetto riot, he rebuked the superintendent of police for not ordering his men to shoot arsonists to kill, looters to maim. He fought court orders to add more blacks to the police department and the fire department. He refused to hear charges of police brutality against blacks, even though those charges were carried to him by one of his own ward leaders, Congressman Ralph Metcalfe of the Third Ward.

Quietly the Mayor made some adjustments in The Organization. Many of the Democratic bosses in the outer ring of white wards were only deadweight, since so little was customarily expected of them. After the elections of 1966, a white backlash helped the Republicans to sweep all those wards as they carried the county and the state. The Mayor saw the figures and decided it was time to bring those wards up, through some solid organizational work. In the next two years, he sacked the bosses of ten of them and moved in younger

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men. He gave these new men more of the sinews of war, more jobs to dispense, more money to spend. To give them something to take to their voters in the home-owning wards, he virtually froze the property tax rate after 1970. The precinct workers there became accustomed to a politics of property values: they fixed potholes in the alleys, plowed driveways, made sure the streets were clean, kept the curbs and sidewalks in repair, saw that dead trees were quickly replaced, and so on. At the same time, the character of their wards was changing, as displaced whites moved into them from the older wards. Thus the outer wards were becoming more Catholic, more Jewish, more lower-middle-class—more culturally congenial to The Organization.

As Congressman Dawson grew feeble, the Mayor limited the role of The Organization's leaders in the ghetto wards. He urged them to go into business in their home wards—into law, real estate, insurance, banking—but he refused to bring them into the more lucrative forms of political business, the citywide and countywide arrangements for legal help, bonding, accounting, construction, and the rest. He never pulled back on them logistically; they still got jobs to dispense, still got their allotment of precinct money for every campaign, because the Mayor wanted them to keep their vote count high. Yet he let them know they were to behave as tacticians, never as strategists. When William Dawson died, most of his power was buried with him, and Ralph Metcalfe, who was closest to his heir, quickly learned how little he would be allowed to say or do. The Mayor expected him to carry the Third Ward, but he would never sit down with Metcalfe and say, "Ralph, *overall*, how do you think we should be running the business?"

As the Mayor shifted his own base, he succeeded in broadening the base of The Organization as a whole. The black vote did slip, but not dramatically, and these small losses were more than offset by the gains The Organization made in the outer wards. For the first time in its history, the Democratic machine enjoyed a genuinely citywide base of support in Chicago.

Richard Daley, therefore, left his political organization in far better shape than he found it. He secured its financial base, kept its distinctive style of campaigning intact, and broadened its appeal to Chicago's electorate. Taken on his own terms, as narrow as they were, he was a successful public man.

IV

Richard Daley placed himself on the wrong side of the leading moral issues in the politics of the last decade: Vietnam, civil rights, government corruption. His position on the war can be discounted; he simply followed the line of the national government until he began to turn against the war with the concrete reasoning of a man who often stopped at two and three wakes in an evening. ("I don't like it," he told his friends. "We're getting back too many of those green bags.") On civil rights, though, his words and policies often were racist, either on their face or in their resonance. And there was little doubt as to his position on corruption in government. It was something he countenanced and even abetted.

As a result, of course, he opened himself to severe criticism. His critics regarded the issues he was wrong on as overriding issues; for them, his stand on those issues provided a complete definition of Daley's morals. If the media's portrayal of him is used as evidence, he was transformed into a grotesque—cast at different times as a king, a satrap, a hoodlum, a mandarin, a pharaoh, a suzerain, an emperor, a fascist, and Genghis Khan. At the least, he was morally discredited.

Actually, he did display a sense of political morality, albeit one of a highly specific kind. It was narrowly shaped by a particular culture and place and time—namely, the Irish Catholicism of the working-class parishes of Chicago, where he came of age politically in the 1920s and the years of the depression.

A man of Daley's background learned to think of the parish as a haven for the values of Irish Catholicism, a preserve within the city. He didn't expect those values to occur spontaneously, any more than he looked for lilac bushes to spring up in the cracks in the sidewalk. He knew, or at least sensed, the importance of the parish apparatus—the buildings, the thirty-five or forty people on the staff, the money it took to keep it all going. He regarded the apparatus not as merely a convenience, a gross means to higher ends, but as

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an integral part of the religion itself: the values and apparatus were fused.

Daley had a similar feeling about The Organization. It also was a preserve, but for the values of a particular strain of the Democratic party. It also was territorial, following ward and precinct lines, as the parish followed geographic boundaries. It also kept up an apparatus, with its offices around the city, and its workers getting around by phone and on foot, and the money it took to run them all. Finally, its values and its apparatus too were fused, just as they were in the parish.

This notion might seem as flawed in city politics as it did in American Catholicism. There, of course, it was a leading target of church liberals after the Vatican Council. They felt the values and the apparatus of the urban parish could indeed be distinguished, the values into content, the apparatus into form. Too often, they showed, the values of charity and dignity were neglected or even sacrificed for the sake of the apparatus—for the building funds, the football team, or a mean-spirited campaign to keep the parish white. They didn't call for a dismantling of the forms, since they felt it was crucial that the faith be a physical presence in the city. They simply didn't want to pay too high a price for them; the forms were really at the business end of the religion and should be kept within limits. This critique in itself suggests a more reasonable critique of Daley, on terms closer to his own.

It is fair to fault him for stressing the forms as much as he did. He did lapse too often into a merely custodial role. He did make his ward bosses feel they would be judged by how well they kept the apparatus running, and by little else. He did let the business end of The Organization spring its limits. His own rhetoric did become stale, and not only because he liked, now and then, to use his version of double-talk. It let him put off the press, muddle it, and gave him more time to watch the signs before he shaped a position. Also he did get caught up too far in the mechanics of the machine, its slates and procedures and its hundred-dollar-a-plate dinners. Much of the time he sounded like little more than a general contractor.

Yet it is only fair to credit him for what he did do through those forms. He did organize small kindnesses on a large scale. He did bring the social welfare values of the Democratic party down to the doorstep, where regular people could still get at them for a job or a loan, some help or advice, or even to shake hands with the devil. Through him, those values weren't just locked into the wording of a platform document somewhere. They were a presence in Chicago, the kind of tangible presence we can all see and understand: they had addresses, phone numbers, and they'd come and knock on your door if you asked.

Of course, a lot of people in Chicago came to feel the presence was Daley's own. *He* was there personally, they seemed to think, as if he would come by to help. Hundreds of thousands of the people in his city felt they knew him; there was an understanding between them, not on everything, but on some of the more important things. They turned him to their own purposes, wove him into their own sense of things. For all his power, he let them make of him what they would. For honest souls who wish to make moral judgments about politics, the career of Richard J. Daley will everlastingly remain a conundrum.

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Arthur O. Lovejoy

LEWIS S. FEUER

When Arthur O. Lovejoy returned to Harvard University as a visiting professor for 1932–33, word quickly spread that the man who could make more distinctions than anybody else in the philosophical profession would soon be confounding the students. Here too was the only man who had taken to heart William James's warning against "the Ph.D. octopus." After thirty-five years of teaching, he was still without a doctorate, and it was known that he regarded most Ph.D. theses as "juvenilia." It was also recalled that he had been the founding spirit of the American Association of University Professors. One would have expected, therefore, that his experience with Harvard graduate students in philosophy would have been a happy one. Instead, it became clear in the fall semester that the *Zeitgeist* had placed Lovejoy at cross-purposes with the new generation. Yet his was the greatest rearguard action my friends and I would ever see, destined though it was, like all such actions, to defeat.

A man more committed to reason than anyone I ever knew, Lovejoy was impervious to ideological fashions; his critical spirit, elevated by his historical researches, seemed to dwell in a transtemporal realm. At Harvard, when he held a seminar, "The Theory of Meaning," to analyze the new logical positivism that was attracting the current generation, most students disliked what he said and how he said it. The next semester, when he gave his great William James lectures on "The Great Chain of Being," few of them attended. All, however, were aware of an intellectual power that had the inner moral resources to stand on its own, supported by neither sect nor school nor society.

The greatest tragedy that can befall a teacher, according to Einstein, is when he finds that his language, method, and problems have ceased to be those of the new generation of students, whose presuppositions he may find not only alien but willfully irrational. This indeed was Lovejoy's situation when he returned to Harvard at the age of fifty-nine. As a student of William James in the nineties, he had acquired a sense of the spontaneous, emergent, and unpredictable character of things—and, above all, of their pervasive temporal nature. He had joined with his own generation at the turn of the century in a revolt against absolute idealism. For several years he had scrutinized Josiah Royce's notion of a nontemporal Absolute, and argued that the Eternal was obsolescent, that the Absolute could not absorb the transient temporal character of human experience; and if it did, would take on such a character itself. By 1930, however, Lovejoy had earned a reputation as (in Arthur Murphy's words) "the Edmund Burke of the epistemological revolution." His powerful book *The Revolt Against Dualism* was a culminating effort to show that when Russell, Whitehead, and Dewey tried to overcome or obliterate the distinction between mental and physical existents, their devices were specious.

But then in 1932 the terms of philosophic discussion began to change rather abruptly in the United States. At Harvard the first Cambridge University disciples of Ludwig Wittgenstein arrived, bringing the curious gospel that held all philosophy to be nonsense. The elder Harvard professors were appalled. Whitehead could not quite believe it when he

LEWIS S. FEUER is University Professor of Sociology and the Humanities at the University of Virginia. His most recent books are *Einstein and the Generations of Science* and *Ideology and the Ideologists.*

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heard one of them read a paper that was avowedly solipsistic; "impressionable young people" were being misled by Wittgenstein, a man who "has done nothing, except perhaps a little in logic," he said. It was hoped that Lovejoy, having dealt so devastatingly with the Girondins of the philosophic revolution, would deal equally with its Jacobins.

Lovejoy sat at the head of the table, his bushy hair almost all gray, with a white moustache and imperial, his eyes alert, occasionally squinting as if from too much reading. His voice was gruff and low, even monotonous, speaking in long, interminable paragraphs with parentheses within parentheses and brackets for digression, a bit haltingly to accommodate the semicolons, all the while twirling his cigarette holder to ease the strain and to replace the intellectual fog with a more congenial smoke. He invited and was pleased by discussion, but only one or two students had the temerity to speak as Lovejoy sat, with his notes scrawled in his large handwriting, and painstakingly analyzed the varied meanings of "verifiable" in the writings of Carnap, Schlick, Neurath, Wittgenstein, and the pragmatists. Each variety of "meaning" was pinned into its case with an appropriate label as if he were an entomologist lovingly affixing his taxonomy to his specimens. Unlike Edmund Burke, Lovejoy never resorted to any rhetorical, dramatic display. He began with the distinctions of common sense, the epistemology of the common man. He charted precisely how our thought-content in the present could refer to the past and future, and to other people's experiences ("transpersonal") as well as our own.

Yet Lovejoy in 1932 found himself in a quandary. He had always taken it for granted that if he could show that a given view entailed a consequence that violated our minimal sense of reality, its proponents would repudiate it. He thought that if he could show that a particular theory led to solipsism, people would reject it as wrong; or that if it entrapped one in the notion that the "person" to whom one was making love was a mechanical sweetheart without consciousness, the dogmatic trance would be shattered; or that if it led to our denying our present consciousness on the ground that only the movements of objects made sense, thereby leaving us incapable of thinking, the logomachy would be abandoned. The new generation was, however, prepared to accept the consequences that Lovejoy considered to be, as he put it, "preposterous." The single-minded young logical positivist would maintain unshakably that he was a solipsist (albeit of a "methodological" kind); the physicalist was nothing loath to make love to his physicalistic sweetheart; and the behaviorist blandly averred that he had no idea what Lovejoy was talking about when he referred to private thoughts or feeling-contents.

Several incidents took place that year and later in the mid-thirties, when Lovejoy was again at Harvard, that poignantly underscored the rift between the "critical realist" and the new generation of philosophic militants.

Lovejoy was an inveterate attender of meetings, at which he was also an invariable raiser of questions. At one session of the Philosophy Club, Henry Leonard, the talented and original symbolic logician, read a paper in which he scorned the propositions of traditional philosophy as nonsense. During the question period, Lovejoy suggested that since at least nine-tenths of what went by the name of philosophy was to be dismissed as nonsense, perhaps someone might investigate what kind of meaning the traditional philosophers intended—and take this as a starting point, rather than begin by closing the discussion. Leonard, tall, pale, with a high-pitched voice, replied vehemently that the traditional propositions of philosophy were unverifiable and therefore meaningless. One felt that strong emotions of a nonlogical kind were at work; the segment of the *Zeitgeist* that diffused through the room in Phillips Brooks House had a foreboding quality. Lovejoy waived his reply, probably wondering why these young men were entering such a negative profession. At Johns Hopkins he urged his students not to seek a career in philosophy unless some "irresistible vocation" impelled them.

Then there was the meeting at which the famed biochemist, amateur sociologist, and historian of science, Lawrence J. Henderson, spoke. A recent convert to logical positivism, Henderson had come to the doctrine by his own unique path. Twenty years before, as a member of Josiah Royce's seminar, he had written a book, *The Fitness of the Environ-*

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ment, which ingeniously collated scientific facts to suggest a new teleological argument for the existence of God. In the intervening time, however, he had sought new gods. In 1926, during the grim period of the *Sacco-Vanzetti* case, he was persuaded to read Vilfredo Pareto's multi-volumed treatise on general sociology. It caused such an intellectual upheaval in him that he derided his old Roycean days. Of all the teachers I had at Harvard, Henderson was the most outspoken admirer of Hitler and Mussolini as "empiricists." He scorned the political philosophers, even those who, like William Ernest Hocking, somewhat shared his political preferences. His face bearded, resembling Galileo whom he revered, his jaw thrust forward aggressively, Henderson walked the Yard with a cane with which he accented his steps, as if disciplining the earth itself.

The paper that Henderson read, "An Approximate Definition of Fact," blended his Paretian positivism into a loosely formulated psychophysical background. Lovejoy naturally proceeded to question Henderson about the realistic assumptions in the use of words such as "receptor" that were at variance with his professed positivism. Thereupon Henderson became ruffled, irritated, and impatient. His eyes flashing, he said loudly that he refused to enter into any discussion of words. Lovejoy was nonplussed by the intolerance and discourtesy. Since the paper itself was entitled, and purported to be, an "approximate definition," presumably some effort to make the definition more explicit was in order, and this inevitably involved discussing words.

Probably the most memorable meeting, however, was the great debate at Baltimore three years later (1935) between Lovejoy and Rudolf Carnap. This was Cărnap's first appearance before the American Philosophical Association, and Lovejoy presented the counter-paper. Carnap expounded with simple clarity the principle of verifiability, explaining to the assembled philosophers why their many years' debate between idealism and realism was meaningless. Give us a method, he challenged, whereby we can test whether objects do or don't exist apart from perception; since none was forthcoming, one could only conclude that the controversy was meaningless. Carnap assigned to philosophers the residual task (for which they were scarcely qualified) of studying the language of science.

Lovejoy then read his counter-paper, and with more vigor and confidence than I had seen in him at Harvard. He was in his beloved Baltimore, his home territory. The audience, not large in those days, was still composed mainly of veterans of the thirty years' war between realism and idealism. He delivered with courteous straightforwardness and without rancor the arguments I had heard three years previously. Every scientist-experimenter, he noted, does accept other colleagues' reports as evidence of what they have observed. The physical theory of objects, whether large as the sun, or small as atomic particles, does (he continued) presuppose and explicate the distinction between physical reality and our psychological perceptions. Positivism has led to a solipsism out of keeping with the realism of ordinary men and scientists alike.

Afterward, there was an excited rush of commentators to the floor. We were witnessing the last stand of classical American philosophy. And for the next generation, metaphysics, apart from some existentialist outcroppings, was to suffer a desuetude. Carnap patently did not take seriously the objections of the metaphysicians; the *Baltimore Sun* reported next day that he refused to attend the session on Plato. He totally ignored Morris R. Cohen's reproach that his message was the old one they had heard from Ernst Mach, "the high priest of positivism." I had the feeling Carnap felt that if Mach were its priest, this was one church to which he and men like Einstein wouldn't mind belonging. But Carnap said he did want to answer Lovejoy's objections, which he regarded as serious. He never quite did, although some attempt to reconcile positivism with common sense was being undertaken in the form of a new emphasis on the "thing-language." Carnap still, however, refused to acknowledge metaphysics as having meaning, and annoyed some of his listeners by saying that it should be explained psychologically. He said he was not enough of a psychologist to do so, but he thought that dualism perhaps expressed an unresolved emotional conflict, whereas monism perhaps projected an emotion rendered dominant.

Lovejoy evidently felt that a sort of duplic-

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ity, a twofold theory of truth, was becoming fashionable among philosophers. A philosophy was becoming a stance rather than one's most sincere reasoned standpoint. When positivists cheerfully conceded that they were methodological solipsists, Lovejoy felt they didn't really believe what they were saying. How could anyone put forward as a methodological principle a tenet that their actions contravened every day?

Sad to say, Lovejoy's hopes for dispassionate, objective philosophizing ran counter to the chief lesson of his historical studies; the philosopher in him was at odds with the historian of ideas. Lovejoy had long maintained that the history of ideas was moved by a combination of temperamental, irrational motives availing themselves of logical "considerations." He admired the disenchanted seventeenth-century moralist La Rochefoucauld, who had said that the head was the dupe of the heart; and he thought that John Adams acted wisely in founding American constitutional theory on the perception that men's reasons were mostly rationalizations. In his classical articles on Henri Bergson, Lovejoy had held that the primary function of a philosophy was to initiate its adherents into a kind of Eleusinian mystery. Yet as a philosopher he wanted his fellow thinkers to transcend the sociological uniformities of the history of ideas. Like every thinker who has believed himself to be grasping a law of history, Lovejoy thought that his philosophizing could transcend the laws of generational fashion and the patterns of irrational temperament. Was he asking the impossible of his younger contemporaries?

Young philosophers want a distinctive, novel method that will enable them to solve the problems that have baffled their predecessors; hence the periodic manifestos that proclaim their respective master keys—or phenomenological introspection, or the scrutiny of linguistic usage, or common sense rendered self-conscious, or the resolving of social problems, or logic as the essence of philosophy. Lovejoy, on the other hand, felt there were no master keys for philosophy. One could only adduce the "considerations" that seemed relevant to a problem, and the "considerations" could be almost anything—a scientific law, a logical presupposition, a necessary distinction, some notion of common sense, or a highly general principle. One weighed them all. Aware that such dispassionate "considerations" were only a partial source of people's philosophies, Lovejoy felt that a professional philosopher, if he stood for anything, had to study competing claims in order to rise above the mode, the vogue, and the emotional bias of his day. Two dispositions, he told his students, were at variance: the desire to edify and the desire to verify: "An eagerness to serve the spiritual needs of one's generation is a generous and noble thing; but it is a very different thing from an eagerness to probe an intricate logical problem to its obscurest elements and the nicest distinctions." He hoped philosophers might become sufficiently rational so that one would see the rare but admirable spectacle of "some once ardent champion of a philosophical revolution frankly repudiating the great discovery upon which the revolution was to have been based." But wasn't the illusion of philosophical revolutions the overriding reality in the history of ideas?

The main theater of Emerson Hall was only about half-full when Lovejoy gave the opening lecture of "The Great Chain of Being." Although the philosophers lost interest rapidly as they got no intimation of a novel aggressive pronouncement, students of history and literature realized that a truly searching vision was at work. Lovejoy conveyed the sense of the collective human mind, struggling with certain basic axioms to which it tried to accommodate all it experienced, and with expressing its gropings consecutively in poetry, romances, philosophies, political ideologies, and scientific ideas. He conveyed it not vaguely but with clarity and an overwhelming documentation.

The drawback again was that there was a mark of the impossible about Lovejoy's historical method. He could preface some observation with the statement "after a lifetime of reading," but the graduate student, having no such accumulation of memories and notes, felt as helpless as a destroyer ordered to maneuver against a battleship. Also, those who aspired to original thinking—whether in criticism, political theory, religion, or philosophy—felt themselves disabled by Lovejoy's method of decomposing philosophies into their unit-ideas and tracing them through their combinations and recombinations. At

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the hands of this Mendeleev of the human mind, one's prized original ideas were reduced to a foreseeable entry in the Periodic Table of Human Ideas. Lovejoy's audience kept dwindling until his last lecture, when he spoke movingly in memory of William James. Although Lovejoy always kept his emotions under strict restraint, he openly venerated James for his Huckleberry Finn–esque spontaneity, his restless, oscillating responsiveness to things.

Even among historians, however, there was an antipathy to Lovejoy's approach in *The Great Chain of Being*, and they could be as fearful for their craft as any trade unionist guarding against an interloper or a novel technology. Lovejoy was once invited to set forth that approach in George Sarton's seminar in the history of science. Sarton was not friendly. He had become a historian of science under the inspiration of Auguste Comte, and all his life, despite his vast erudition, Sarton remained a simple Comtist. He criticized Edward Gibbon, for instance, for having failed to recognize that the growth of scientific knowledge was a steady, irreversible force, making for progress and underwriting the creed of historical optimism. Sarton said at the seminar that Lovejoy's method of tracing unit-ideas through recombinations and recurrences violated both the Comtist linear principle and the unity of the individual scientist's contribution. Lovejoy seemed saddened, his face drawn. He replied that the proof of the pudding would be in the eating, but appeared too tired to point out that the "unity" of a thinker's work was often a fiction that disguised various independent elements, or even discordant ones, absorbed through various processes into its complex.

At this time, around 1932, Marxism was being talked about, and by 1935 had made many converts among Lovejoy's students. That development deepened Lovejoy's sense of isolation. He was much troubled when an able young Hopkins colleague relinquished his academic career to become a Communist functionary. At least, said Lovejoy, his colleague was going to live by his doctrine rather than simply write about it the way the others did. He felt that young Jews especially seemed to need some political orthodoxy as a substitute for their lost religion. (Lovejoy for many years had been the only chairman of any major university philosophy department in the United States where a man's Jewish background was not a reason for exclusion.)

As the depression grew worse and the election of 1932 approached, Lovejoy vigorously opposed Herbert Hoover; he thought Hoover's speech about grass growing in the streets of New York if Franklin D. Roosevelt were elected was "scandalous." He wondered why young socialists hadn't acted as poll watchers to prevent votes being stolen from Norman Thomas, and said he had been a poll watcher once himself. He told of his work in the Maryland Civil Liberties Union to secure a change of venue on behalf of a Negro accused of murder. He disapproved, however, of the teachers' union that was later organized at Harvard, and asked how could professors hold on to their scientific detachment when they committed themselves to the labor movement? How could they serve as scientific analysts of the labor movement if the facts tended to embarrass their partisanship? He said he had learned a great deal from Eugene Lyons's *Assignment in Utopia*, and urged me to read it.

In 1937, Communist scholars published in their newly founded journal a symposium on Lovejoy's historical method as exemplified in *The Great Chain of Being*. Lovejoy responded with a page of trenchant writing that was probably the pithiest criticism of the Marxist historiography of ideas ever published. He readily conceded that the doctrine of the chain of being had often been used as an apologetic for stratified societies, but when Plato's conception of the world was said to have been caused by the characteristics of Athenian society, he still remained an "agnostic," for the fact was that "after all, nature, apart from society, has a tolerably hierarchical look," which was why Aristotle had been led in the first place to the idea of a scale of nature. In any case, said Lovejoy, "Mind-reading seems to me a difficult and precarious art. . . . We *know*, from the texts, that this reason for the idea was present in the minds of these writers; we do not, I believe, know, from the texts, that the analogy of a hierarchical political order was similarly operative in the genesis of the 'principle' of gradation. . . ." Unfortunately the Communists

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allowed Lovejoy only a page; otherwise he would have explored, he said, the "larger questions of psychology and of historical method." Thus we never had the benefit of his full analysis of these momentous issues.

Actually, of course, Lovejoy engaged frequently in what he called "mind-reading." His discussion of why people were attracted to Bergson's philosophy was as much a psychological inquiry into human motives as was his *Reflections on Human Nature*. He once remarked at the seminar that he had known the principal figures in the rise of behaviorism, Knight Dunlap and J. B. Watson, and both had told him that they experienced little mental imagery. Lovejoy wondered whether this impoverished experience might not be related to their readiness to exclude mental contents from their science. He also implied that the chief logical positivists were probably men whose personal lives were on a shallow emotional plane. Yet Lovejoy seemed to be arguing for a kind of "textual positivism" (as we might call it) in which one delineated the filiation of ideas but never knew what prompted the "ideators."

I have felt that Lovejoy preferred to avoid studying men's motives because he did not like what he saw of them; he turned "textual positivist" when he surmised that the thinkers were impelled by lowly and coarse motives. Historical materialism was unconvincing to him because it did not explain why his own generation had rebelled against philosophical idealism. Certainly no change in the American capitalist system explained why the idealism that had been the postulate of the 1890s was rejected within the next twenty years. And the one thinker in his time who tried consciously to articulate the philosophical counterpart to socioeconomic tendencies, John Dewey, seemed to Lovejoy to misdirect himself into the crudest fallacies. Why, then, had his own generation moved from idealism to realism? Had the distribution of psychological temperaments changed from what had prevailed among the generation of his teachers, Royce and Howison? Lovejoy never ventured an answer in his own autobiography. What he would have thought of such novel methods as the study of the statistical frequencies of words and metaphors is an open question.

Through all the turmoil of generations, classes, parties, the world wars, and the contest between democratic and totalitarian societies, between capitalist and communist systems, Lovejoy remained the most imposing figure in the history of American academic freedom. His integrity was of a timeless kind that would not be subordinated to any political or tactical considerations. More than any other person, he was the prime mover behind the American Association of University Professors. It was characteristic of the man that at the outset of his career, at the age of twenty-eight, he was prepared to sacrifice his job simply and solely to protest what he regarded as a violation of academic freedom. Yet he refused to dramatize his role or act the academic prima donna; and above all he utterly rejected what he regarded as a leftist myth—that American capitalism was the implacable enemy of academic freedom. He rejected Veblen's view that the teaching of the social sciences in American colleges "reflect[s] unduly the interests and views of a single class." He argued not only that the greater gifts to American higher education have usually been "notably exempt from formal restrictions upon freedom of teaching," but that the privately endowed universities assured their faculties academic freedom more than did many state institutions. He felt that "at the close of the third decade of the twentieth century, freedom of thought and speech in universities is growing wider and less insecure."

I heard the story of the creation of the AAUP from Lovejoy himself in June 1960. During a visit to the East, I telephoned him in Baltimore, and he invited me to his lodgings. We had recently been in correspondence over some studies of mine in the history of ideas. He greeted me warmly after these many years, and then said, "I am now blind," having overstrained his eyes a few years back. He was thinner, had a heavier beard, and sat with a walking stick beside him, but still twirled his cigarette holder. He proudly showed me the new paperback edition of his *Essays in the History of Ideas*, although he said with some annoyance that the back cover misdescribed him as professor of philosophy at Harvard University when it should have been Johns Hopkins. We both knew that this was probably the last time we would talk together, and he seemed desirous,

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as I had never known him to be before, to talk of his past.

It all started, he said, when "I was fired at Leland Stanford" over the case of Edward A. Ross, the professor of sociology who was opposed to the immigration of Chinese. Mrs. Stanford was much offended because, as she said, her husband had been "very fond of the Chinese. It was not simply that he had used them as workmen to construct his railroad." Thereupon Ross was fired. A letter was then circulated justifying President David Starr Jordan; it was intended for the public, and every professor was invited to sign it. "I was then an associate professor. I felt that the letter implied that Ross was guilty of improprieties, when all he was guilty of was offending Mrs. Stanford. 'I shall write a letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle* about this,' I decided." At that time Mrs. Stanford was evidently in a highly emotional state. "My letter was published. I was fired the next day."

Lovejoy, as I knew from his long letter in Upton Sinclair's *The Goose-Step: A Study of American Education*, actually had already resigned his post, but then was told to cease teaching at once. (All others who resigned in protest, he wrote, were either unmarried or, if married, had no children.)

It was 1901. Lovejoy, twenty-eight years old, without a Ph.D., went looking for a job. Having heard of an opening at Washington University in Saint Louis, he went east to see its president. "I found him on a rowboat off an island in Minnesota. I got the job. The experience convinced me that an organization was necessary. When I got to Johns Hopkins, I felt the time was fair. I worked two years to get it organized. For political reasons, we decided to limit membership to full professors. When we first met at Hopkins, Bloomfield was chairman. Then it took me two and a half hours to persuade Dewey to accept the presidency." Lovejoy was a bit uncertain about the date, but there was in fact a formal organization meeting in 1914.

Then he described how the AAUP undertook its first investigation of an academic freedom case. "I was going to New York for the Easter vacation to see some plays. When the train stopped at Newark, I bought a copy of the *New York Post*. There was a report that there had been dismissals at Utah University, and that a professor of English had been removed from his chairmanship; there was an allusion to Mormon influence, and resignations in protest. An editorial said that perhaps the new AAUP would advise us as to the facts.

"I had only enough money with me for a week in New York. So, after dinner, I went out to Dewey's. He was already going to bed. I asked him if he would put up the money, and get it back from the Association later, so that I could go out to Utah. Next morning, Dewey got the money from the bank, and I went out to Utah. I tried to make that first investigation and report a model. I spent more time on cases for the next few years than on philosophy."

A strong exponent of the right of academic freedom, Lovejoy also insisted just as unswervingly that the professor had a corresponding duty to uphold academic integrity. If any professor violated that commitment, Lovejoy would not plead on his behalf. It is this principle of academic integrity that would have separated him as much from our latter-day latitudinarians as it estranged him in 1914 from the German professoriat, which he had once admired. When those professors commenced signing manifestos founded on lies, Lovejoy commented in his typical style—restrained, understated, and overqualified—in words that might well be engraved on the walls of every university library:

> We have at the same time formed certain conceptions of the intellectual and moral qualities reasonably to be expected from professional scholars, above all from leaders of the profession. It has seemed to us that professors ought to be scrupulous in their published statements of fact, careful in their examination of evidence, and moderately acute in their discrimination of the proved from the unproved, and the decisive from the irrelevant consideration. Scholars, we have felt, ought not to believe all that they see in the newspapers, even of their own country; in reading documents published in newspapers only, they should heed rather what the document itself proves than what the headline or the editorial comment says it proves; and they should not affirm "of their own knowledge" about matters in which they have no expert competency, and with which they can have had no first-hand acquaintance. We have gone so far as to expect that trained scholars, as a class, even in times of great popular excitement, will retain

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something of the critical faculty and manifest some detachment and coolness of judgment; that they will exhibit a greater ability than the average man to understand how a situation appears from a point of view not their own; that they will be less subject than other men to the more frenzied forms of national feeling; and that their public utterances will be characterized by some moral elevation and dignity, and a degree of restraint.

To Lovejoy academic freedom did not authorize the university to organize itself into a center for political activism to reconstitute society. To him the scholar had been granted the privilege of the lecture hall, the mandated audience, and the leisure and materials for research precisely because, as someone not committed to the seeking of political power either for himself or his party, his findings would be available to all, and not partake of self-interest or partisan identification. The advancement of knowledge was thus the sole ground of the university: "It is, more distinctively, the chief organized agency for the advancement of science and the canvassing of new ideas. It is the outpost of the intellectual life of a civilized society, the institution set up on the frontier of human knowledge to widen the dominion of man's mind." Lovejoy's favorite metaphor for the scholar was that of the frontiersman penetrating the unknown; he repudiated the metaphor of the scholar and the scientist as revolutionists.

Evidently Lovejoy did not feel that the right of academic freedom should be extended to provide a defense for those practicing what he construed to be sexual immorality. In 1910, when he went to Johns Hopkins, he replaced James Mark Baldwin, a man of scientific reputation who had been found in a house of ill fame. Despite the sympathetic support of such men as Josiah Royce, Baldwin had been dismissed from his post. Nor would the subsequent statutes of the AAUP have protected him in his tenure.

In the last hour of our afternoon together, Lovejoy told me of his early life and family. He grew up in New England, and was descended from a long line of farmers in West Andover, Massachusetts; the earliest Lovejoy had immigrated in the 1760s. Lovejoy's grandfather had turned to business in Boston, a carpet establishment. Lovejoy's father, born in Boston, studied medicine at Harvard, but continued his studies in Germany and there married the woman who became Lovejoy's mother. She, however, died early. His father tried to practice medicine in South Boston but "couldn't stand it." He next tried to practice in Germantown, near Philadelphia, where he met and married Lovejoy's stepmother. Then he gave up medicine and moved to Newton, Massachusetts, where he later entered the low-church ministry, resigning from the Episcopal ministry to join the Reform Episcopal.

Lovejoy's father was of scholarly mind, and taught Hebrew to clergymen in Philadelphia. Arthur himself was raised on biblical literature. "I was the only child, the only one to take it out on that my father had," said Lovejoy, with a suggestion of acerbity. His father made him learn Hebrew, and Lovejoy said that he could still remember Genesis in Hebrew. He had learned German at home. Then the family had moved to Oakland, California, and he took the oral examination for admission to the University of California. Although when asked to name the counties of the state, he knew only Alameda, he was admitted nonetheless.

Lovejoy asked me about the Philosophical Union at Berkeley, where William James had launched the pragmatic movement in a celebrated lecture, and where Lovejoy himself had spoken several times. I told him that it no longer existed and that the philosophers were mostly discussing ordinary language. He replied wearily, "That's philosophy on its last legs." Then he said: "I can't understand how intelligent people can go in for ordinary language philosophy. It has been sufficiently damned by Bertrand Russell." In his view the Great Chain of Philosophies had evidently terminated; one wished one could have found out from him, as a historian, why. Late in the afternoon, a graduate student who was serving as Lovejoy's secretary arrived to read aloud several more pages of the books that Lovejoy was preparing and revising for publication. I said my farewell to the loyal scholar who, despite his blindness, was continuing his work.

As a graduate student at Harvard Lovejoy had "picked up" the idea of the historical tracing of unit-ideas from Wilhelm Windelband's newly translated *History of Philosophy*. It suited his modesty, his skepticism, as well as his broad interests, which ranged from

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the history of religion to the history of science and political ideas, and to literature as the chief avenue for the diffusion of philosophic ideas. I could never put together a coherent theory of his diverse interests. Once, at his rooms in Adams House where each weekend he would have an evening with his students, I asked him whether he had gone to hear Bergson lecture when he was a student in Paris. Lovejoy replied that he had not—he had been studying cannibalism at the time. I could not quite reconcile cannibalism with critical realism and the Great Chain of Being, and I knew too little of Freud at that time to probe for a nonlogical explanation. Indeed, even if I had known more, I would have felt that a component of integrity, a quirk of reason, had somehow emerged in Lovejoy, above and beyond the trammels of the irrational.

I once saw him sitting alone near the closing hour at the Faculty Club looking through the daily papers, and we got to talking. I asked him why he had become so much interested in the history of theology, since as far as I could see he held to no theological views. He replied that religious ideas had dominated those of most human beings during the course of their history, and that therefore he was interested in them. Probably, in his shyness, he preferred not to reveal his deeper motives. His early articles in theological journals occasionally hinted at a religious longing.

Drawn as he was to the doctrine of emergent evolution, and writing some of his most brilliant articles in defense of that theory, Lovejoy still felt that such thinkers as L. T. Hobhouse and Samuel Alexander had failed, from a logical standpoint, to attach a theistic basis or conclusion to the evolutionary process. He once remarked at dinner: "One may have strong emotions about certain things, but that has nothing to do with the cogency of the argument." For a brief period, as George Boas, his warm friend and colleague for many years, tells, he was a member of a Unitarian church and "used to pass the plate," but that didn't last long. He did say that "maybe there was Something out there, at the beginning or the end."

At Johns Hopkins, Lovejoy created a center for the history of ideas which, without subsidies or secretaries, exerted a tremendous influence on the world's scholarship. For example, a few years ago, Sir Isaiah Berlin, lecturing on romanticism, spoke of his delight at discovering Lovejoy's writings. Lovejoy declined a permanent appointment at Harvard in 1933 because, he told Boas, Baltimore was the only place where anyone called him Arthur! He was the conscience of American scholarship, and people are rarely on a first-name footing with their conscience.

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J. K. Huysmans: A Study in Decadence

EDITH HARTNETT

The son of a French bourgeoise and a Dutch lithographer descended from generations of missal painters, Charles-Marie-Georges Huysmans translated his name into Flemish and became Joris-Karl. In 1884 he wrote the most influential Decadent book, *A rebours*, later published in English as *Against the Grain* (1931). To call this a novel would be to torture the word, yet it has fascinated generations of readers since it first appeared. The book is a sort of manifesto, without a program but implying certain necessary political and social choices, as does French Decadent aesthetics generally. Like Charles Baudelaire and Gérard de Nerval earlier, Huysmans and the later Decadents were writers in search of Catholicism, and they turned the Church into a forest of symbols. Huysmans's whole work is a *Bildungsroman* tracing his personal development from a disciple of Naturalism, sitting at the feet of Zola, to a Benedictine oblate at the foot of the cross. A later work, *En Route*, situates him on his *via dolorosa*; it is the first of a Catholic trilogy tracing his pursuit of an aesthetic/authoritarian symbol that he could submit to. The titles are like tablets marking the stations of the Way: *En Route*, *La Cathédrale*, *L'Oblat*.

Huysmans was a discerning art critic, virtually the first to recognize the importance of the Impressionists. The style of his own work, from his early Zolaesque works to the end, is uniformly high. Paul Valéry has said of his writing: "He forged a style that was peculiarly suited to his nerves: a language that was always striving after the unexpected and the extreme, overloaded with adjectives perverted from their usual meaning; an elaborate monologue, a curious mixture of rare words, peculiar overtones, trivialities, and poetic *trouvailles*."

Huysmans's importance lies in the fact that he became the foremost exponent of the Decadent school, which included Aurevilly, Villiers de L'isle-Adam, the Goncourt brothers, Rémy de Gourmont, and many others. Huysmans derived in a direct line from Baudelaire and Gérard de Nerval, and with *Against the Grain* he became the center of a new literary development. He is thus the link between the early art-for-art's-sake writers and the generation that followed him. A *Société Huysmans* was founded soon after his death and is still flourishing.

The hero of *A rebours* is Des Esseintes. He is in part a portrait of Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, the aristocratic sensualist and literary hanger-on. But in much greater part he is the author's idealized self-image. The Count is wealthy enough to indulge all the Decadent fantasies that Huysmans, a civil servant in a government ministry, could not begin to manage. The Count had a famous pet tortoise whose carapace he encrusted with precious stones, causing himself much amusement but killing the tortoise; the detail is ascribed to Des Esseintes. The Count lived in a bizarre chateau reminiscent of the one to which Des Esseintes withdraws. The hero of the book is a wealthy Huysmans, and the Count was in some degree a prototype. Des Esseintes, like the Count again, can afford neurasthenia and retreats to a grotesque private asylum outside Paris. There he is totally insulated from the sights, sounds, and smells of external reality that disgust him, fill him with ennui. He immerses himself entirely in the invention and dissection of the most esoteric sensual fantasies of which his overwrought imagination is capable. He demands only that the stimuli be exotic *à outrance* or,

EDITH HARTNETT, a member of the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, is currently working on a study of French Decadence.

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better yet, artificial as well. Every room is a unique experiment in extravagant visual stimulation. His dining room, for example, is a sort of glass bubble encased in an outer chamber, the space between filled with water in which artificial marine creatures swim, ingeniously contrived, flashing jewel-like colors. A chapter is devoted to the painfully minute analysis of the components of rare odors, another to sounds, another to tastes, and so on. At one point Des Esseintes decides to visit England. He gets maps and guidebooks and then goes to a French "English" café, where he takes "English" refreshment and notes the environment while studying his guidebooks. Then, feeling that he has extracted the essence of England and missed only the tiresome voyage and the repugnant people, he returns to his chateau with all the sensations of a weary traveler coming home.

Des Esseintes's walls are hung with prints by Jan Luyken, a series called "Religious Persecutions" depicting

> . . . skulls laid open by sword-cuts, pierced with nails, riven asunder with saws, bowels drawn out of the belly, and twisted round rollers, fingernails torn out one by one with pincers, eyes put out, eyelids turned back and transfixed with pins, limbs dislocated or carefully broken bones laid bare and scraped for hours with knives.

Note that some of this must have been supplied by Des Esseintes's own fantasy, the prolongation in time of these appalling images. He also hangs El Greco's *Crucifixion,* delighting in the waxy yellows and greens of the putrefying flesh. Like Baudelaire, Des Esseintes might say: "I have cultivated my hysteria with joy and terror." His life is wholly absorbed in his exacerbated nervous attention to the minutiae of artificially contrived sensual experiment. It is not surprising that Huysmans himself called Barbey d'Aurevilly the only critic who "saw clear." Aurevilly had written of *A rebours:* "After such a book it only remains for the author to choose between the muzzle of a pistol or the foot of the Cross." He had said the same thing about Baudelaire, the last lines of whose "Voyage à Cythére" are:

> Ah! Lord! give me the strength and the courage to contemplate my heart and my body without disgust!

The final words of *A rebours* are spoken by Des Esseintes as he leaves his retreat:

> Ah! my courage fails and my heart sickens! Lord, take pity on the Christian who doubts, on the unbeliever who yearns to believe! . . .

The paragraph terminating in this poignant appeal begins with a typical Decadent image: the barbarians are at the gates; human mediocrity is about to engulf the sensitive soul. Art and religion fused together are the only refuge. This last paragraph is emblematic of all the later books; Huysmans might have written them, like Des Esseintes, from his armchair. They constitute a single effort to fuse aesthetic and social attitudes with a wavering spiritual awareness. It might be an embryonic paragraph, but in Huysmans's case, *à rebours* even here, phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny.

Aurevilly's admiration for Huysmans was reciprocated. Des Esseintes's library was, understandably, small. But apart from a unique edition of Baudelaire bound in flesh-colored leather and printed in episcopal lettering, the place of honor was held by Aurevilly, whose book was bound in liturgical colors and printed on sanctified vellum, the capitals adorned with flourishes like satanic tails. Des Esseintes cherished Aurevilly because he was expelled from the Church as a heretic, yet persisted in praising her, "insinuating into that praise a note of almost sadistic sacrilege." Praising her, as it were, *à rebours.* The book was *Les Diaboliques.*

Huysmans referred to his work as a "progress," but it is hard to see why. From *A rebours* onward he never relinquished the aesthetic Decadent view of art and life. His style is a blend of the universal idiom of terror and his unique sense of the Flemish grotesque, to which he liked to think he had ancestral as well as artistic ties. His Decadence, arising as it did in a disordered post-industrial world, caused him to recast medieval beliefs, or rather the artifacts produced by those beliefs, into a modern cult. There is no real change from one book to the next; Huysmans simply shifts his attention from one art form to another, demonstrating the Decadent's incapacity to separate the artistic and the spiritual. Except for a minor medieval doctrine that helps him harmonize sex-

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ual and spiritual conflicts, there is no self-questioning or moral renewal.

In the introduction to *Certains*, published in Paris in 1889, Huysmans wrote:

> The theory of environment as applied to art by M. Taine operates even in the case of great artists—but *in reverse*, because then the effect of environment is to fill them with hatred and revulsion.

This depraved environment creates alienated artists who:

> retrace their steps down the centuries and, out of disgust for the shameful promiscuities which they are forced to suffer, throw themselves into the abyss of the ages, into the tumultuous spaces of dream and nightmare.

In the same book he praised Gustave Moreau's art because it suggested "sacramental formulae of obscene prayers, insidious appeals to rape, sacrilege, torture, and murder." Whistler's studies of women he found "phantomatic," his nocturnes like "fluidic dreams." He praised Félicien Rops for glorifying "the supernatural aspects of perversity," and congratulated Degas for having captured the female nude in the "frog-like and simian attitudes" characteristic of her toilette, and for depicting "the moist horror of a body which no washing can purify." He fully subscribed to the medieval view of woman as evil, unclean, the devil's instrument.

Là-bas, published in 1891, is Huysmans's study of satanism and sadism and their relationship to faith. Satanism had begun to interest Huysmans because it provided the only available escape from an abhorrent world, since at this stage many intellectual obstacles prevented his acceptance of the faith. He had for some time seen Naturalism as a dead end, doomed to repeat the same sordid stories of banal lives; and his convictions concerning art for art's sake, combined with his passion for the exceptional, caused him to explore satanism, at first merely as a source of exotic sensations. Satanism was in the air and Huysmans, vulnerable, inhaled it.

In the first chapter of *Là-bas* we meet Durtal and Des Hermies, each the author's mouthpiece, their dialogue a projection of Huysmans's interior debate. The subject of that debate is the Naturalists, whom Des Hermies abhors because they glorify materialism and the democracy of art. They "deny wonder and reject the extra-sensual. . . . [Their] field . . . is the region below the umbilicus. Oh, [Naturalism is] a hernia clinic and it offers the soul a truss." Although Durtal defends the Naturalists for having rescued literature from the abuses of Romanticism, he really agrees with Des Hermies, who disappears from Huysmans's subsequent work because Durtal absorbs him. Shortly after their discussion, Durtal admits that his friend is right, that "the unsatisfied need for the supernatural was driving people, in default of something loftier, to spiritism and the occult." What is needed is a spiritual naturalism, retaining Zola's documentary realism and precise description, but brought to bear upon the mysteries of the soul. This fusion Durtal had found in the Flemish primitive paintings, which depict common, even ugly, people from whose faces spiritual joy or pain shines out. Then follows a long and horrifying recollection of the Grünewald *Crucifixion*, which is, says Durtal, "what he is seeking." Grünewald had expressed the sublime in the very impurity and weakness of the flesh—*à rebours* again.

The rest of the novel alternates between descriptions of the sadistic sexual excesses of Gilles de Rais, the fifteenth-century Bluebeard whose life Durtal is writing, and Durtal's own explorations—with the help of a succubus named Madame Chantelouve—into satanism and the Black Mass. What binds the two strands together, though loosely, is the implicit suggestion that both Gilles and the practitioners of the Black Mass have established the reality of a spiritual world whose very diabolism implies the reality of God. Satanism was merely inverted Christianity. And in fact the true satanist is a sacrilegious *voyant* or unfrocked priest whose eroticism is heightened by the profanation of holy things. But how could such profanation be efficacious at all unless the things were indeed holy?

In his preface to the 1903 edition of *A rebours*, Huysmans calls sadism the "bastard of Catholicism."

> [It] presupposes a religion to be violated. It consists in a sacrilegious practise, in a moral rebellion,

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in a spiritual debauch, in an aberration which is completely ideal, entirely Christian. . . . The power of sadism consists entirely in the prohibited pleasure of transferring to Satan the worship and the prayers which are due to God; it consists in non-observance of Catholic precepts, or even in observing them *in reverse* [italics mine].

In 1895 Huysmans published *En Route*, the first book in an autobiographical trilogy describing Durtal's inward struggle that culminates in his conversion to Catholicism. The struggle is intense and the outcome questionable, because Durtal/Huysmans appears to have been converted to the *art* of Catholicism rather than to Catholicism itself, except for one or two doctrines that he greatly magnified because they helped him explain his fascination with suffering. After *Là-bas*, Huysmans became a habitué of the Church of Saint Sulpice, because he had fallen in love with plainchant and there was a trained choir there. He went for vespers, when the church was less crowded, and because "the ugliness of the nave, with its heavy vaulting, vanished at night." He was sometimes obliged to sit through a sermon, which he found dull and irritatingly commonplace, but this seemed a small price to pay when the scuffling of feet and chairs announced the departure of the *canaille* and the beginning of the music. "The proof of Catholicism is its art," cries Durtal, and its art is a unity, all its forms deriving from a single matrix and serving a single purpose. Plainchant is vocal architecture with curving, melodic lines like Romanesque arches and soaring melodies full of delicate tracery like Gothic spires. Compared to plainchant, secular music is so many "fonts of toilet water."

Durtal wonders why he cannot pray, why he is merely "haunted by Catholicism, intoxicated by its atmosphere of incense and wax, moved even to tears by its prayers, touched even to the marrow by its psalms and chants." (What attracts Huysmans here, and always, seems precisely the negative model held out by Protestants as a warning against the "seduction of Rome"—mystery, incense, Latin, sexually ambiguous vestments, tears of remorse, and so on.) Durtal concludes that the obstacle is his yielding to his baser instincts. And it is in this state of aesthetic excitation, combined with abhorrence of his own carnality, that Durtal meets the Abbé Gévresin, in life the Abbé Mugnier, vicar of Saint Thomas d'Aquin.

The two men are drawn to each other in a bookshop where Durtal is asking for books about Sainte Lydwine of Schiedam, and they walk home together discussing this extraordinary ascetic who inflicted unimaginable agonies upon her flesh. Durtal visits the priest often, but not yet for spiritual advice. He thinks of writing a life of Sainte Lydwine, but he is not ready. His sleep is shaken by licentious dreams:

> Nude figures danced in his brain to the tune of psalms, and he woke from these dreams weak and panting, ready, if a priest had been there, to throw himself at his feet with tears, just as he would have abandoned himself to the basest pleasures, had the temptation suddenly come to him.

Torn by visions of excessive holiness and excessive eroticism, Durtal visits the Abbé Gévresin, who calms his doubts by telling him that most of his temptations will be remitted, most of his sufferings placed upon others spiritually better able to endure them. This doctrine of Mystical Substitution so consoles Durtal that from that day the worst of his sufferings cease. Mystical Substitution helped Huysmans to fuse the two forms of extravagant physical fantasy between which his imagination bounced and rebounded—erotic sadism and religious asceticism. Further, he had found a Divine Sufferer who was totally strong and innocent and hence an authority to whom he could submit. The Abbé and Durtal spend much time talking about ascetics who were bizarre enough, for the most part, to satisfy Des Esseintes. They discuss Suso, who for eighteen years carried on his back a large cross from which nails protruded; Benedict Labre, who gathered up and put back the lice that fell out of his sores; Mother Pasidée, who scourged her flesh and poured vinegar on the wounds and then hanged herself upside down in a chimney with a fire beneath her; and the weird Order of the Daughters of Saint Magloire, whose novices had to take an oath that their previous lives had been given over to sin, and were rejected if, upon examination, their virginity proved to be intact. Huysmans had at last found a way to convert carnal excess into charity, into the sublime, a way to spiritualize *pourriture*, the putrid.

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Next, Durtal spends a week in retreat at the Trappist monastery of Notre Dame de l'Atre (in reality Notre Dame d'Igny). Here he is impressed with the rigors of the monks' lives, though not subjected to them himself; in fact he had seen to it beforehand that he would be excused, that the harshness of the rule would be mitigated for him. (Interestingly enough, Huysmans himself could not tolerate the least physical inconvenience. A piano overhead caused him to change his lodgings, and he was irritated to the point of illness by a bad wine or a mediocre meal. He never found a way to spiritualize these things, nor had he the money to escape them. Before he made his own retreat he asked whether he would be obliged to eat vegetables cooked in water—rather than bouillon, presumably—and was told to his relief that he would not. It was only at the end of his life that he saw himself as a suitable vehicle for suffering, rather than as solely a beneficiary.) But at this stage, at the *En Route* station, it is somehow enough that Durtal succeeds at last, after immense agony of spirit, in making his confession, and bursts into tears when the prior pronounces the words, *Ego te absolvo*.

Worldly concerns continue to intrude, however, and Huysmans describes them with characteristic touches of Flemish grotesque. Durtal is offended by a fat Chaucerian monk whom he cannot believe to be a holy man. He is confused when told to "say ten" on his rosary as a penance. Had the prior meant ten beads or ten whole rosaries, amounting to a marathon five hundred prayers? Moreover, he found these "drops of elevation taken in globules" so uncongenial that he could scarcely tolerate the rosary at all. Finally he decides to gulp down the larger "dose." (Metaphors of disease require medical metaphors to balance them.) And although the art with which he is chiefly concerned here is plainchant, there are diatribes against the degenerate artistic taste of the postmedieval Church. Despite these reservations, however, Durtal returns to Paris renewed in grace and determined to keep himself that way.

The Church looked askance at Huysmans's conversion and attacked his book. He replied in a letter that *En Route* had not been directed to Catholics but to the intelligentsia of Paris, among whom there was much confused mysticism that his book might help to clarify. Further, the book was a sincere confession, as well as an attempt to describe the glories of Church liturgy and art. On the contrary, his chief worry had been that his "*catholicisme enragé*" would spark the antagonism of "the Jews and Freemasons who ruled France."

In 1898 Huysmans published *La Cathédrale*, a book that he hoped would do for architecture and sculpture what *En Route* had done for plainchant. *La Cathédrale* is the central book of the trilogy and the one that marks Huysmans's definitive conversion. The curious thing about this book is that there are no moral doubts or debates; they have all been translated into aesthetic ones. Huysmans did not share the Romantics' optimism about man. His fastidious aversion to all things human he perhaps interpreted as the existential experience of Original Sin. In a preface to *A rebours*, written twenty years after the book and six years after *La Cathédrale*, he speaks of his early admiration for Schopenhauer: "I like his ideas on the horror of existence, on the stupidity of the world, on the harshness of fate." But the Church explains these things and provides remedies, while "the German quack, after clearly showing you that the complaint you suffer from is incurable, turns his back on you with a sardonic grin." But Durtal/Huysmans had found that the suffering was mystical and the remedy was Art. *La Cathédrale* is a totally enclosed and self-contained symbol of religious aestheticism.

On the pattern of *A rebours*, *La Cathédrale* too is devoted chapter by chapter to the minute dissection of Notre Dame de Chartres and the Catholic liturgy. The difference is that here Durtal supplies learned mystical-symbolic interpretations of every color, every bit of stained glass, every iconic or architectural detail, every sound, every odor, herb, flower, gem, or material. His authorities are the patristic writers, the saints' lives of the Middle Ages, and the *Legenda Aurea*, a compendium of medieval lore by Jacobus Voragine. Durtal admits the sensuality of his devotion: "I am less conscious now of its [the Cathedral's] soul than of its body. . . . I have fallen humanly in love with its beauty; the spiritual aspect has vanished to leave nothing behind but the earthly part. Alas! . . ." Huysmans seems not to have realized that the

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very nature of aesthetic Decadence ensures that one loses the sense of the whole through excessive, and obsessive, attention to detail. For him the spirit of the Church killeth, but the object giveth life. Finally, through suffering, through deliberate aesthetic mortification, he moves toward grace: "I look for sensations; but . . . it is precisely because Communion is so frigid that it is the more meritorious and virtuous."

For Durtal, the Renaissance defiled the churches, introduced "gross license" into their pure forms, their visual arts. It was the great profanation of the cathedrals, "the death of the Mystical soul of monumental theology, of religious art—all the great art of France."

In the endless discussions of medieval mystical lore, Durtal's racial ideas emerge, and it is difficult to see them as exclusively either antiquarian or religious, or even psychopathological. One rather long dialogue with a priest concerns the symbolism of the North, South, East, and West. Durtal disputes the patristic literature and insists that the North is virtuous, the South vicious, breeding evil like maggots in the hot sun. He claims that on Calvary Christ turned his back on the South, which had crucified him, and gave his benediction to the North.

Of course the priest who laughs indulgently at these crude racist notions, these uncharitable and unhistorical ideas is Huysmans's creation. Huysmans went so far as to lament the intrusion of Joan of Arc into history—and for a Frenchman that is far. His argument was that she had united the South with the North, whereas without her France would have been made up of Germanic races only. Unlike a medieval Christian, Huysmans cared nothing about the historicity of an event. The important thing about anything, whether beautiful as Chartres or ugly as Lourdes, was that it should lend itself to aestheticizing. For the medieval man an ugly crucifix was all right, because the important thing was the historical reality of the Passion, which could be signified by any crucifix. Nor would he toy with speculations about Christ turning his back on the South or willfully extending his arms in any direction. That there is no evidence for these things did not trouble Huysmans; he found the detail aesthetically fitting. Huysmans is here asserting a myth about history and nature that objectifies (and vulgarizes) the national dilemma. How was social order to be understood and restored given continuous upheaval and class conflict, not to mention the aliens pouring into the capital from Alsace? Huysmans reorders nature and reifies geography to explain his own social attitudes. For the Decadents, nature has no other function; *as nature* it simply disappears. It becomes chaste, or lascivious, or immoral—transmuted into a store of symbols, an artifact.

A few pages later, Durtal calls Rembrandt (a northerner) a "Judaizing Protestant" whose church would always be a synagogue, "so strong is the odour of the Jew in all his work." Much more to his taste is a painting of Saint Francis by Zurbarán (a southerner). The saint's eyes are ecstatic; they look blinded; the mouth is open and livid and the body looks like a fleshless corpse. "And terror came over the beholder as he thought of the excessive maceration and overwhelming penances. . . ." Then there are the reflections upon martyrdom:

> He [Saint Vincent of Spain, a southerner], thought Durtal, was literally butchered and cooked, for we are told in the legend according to Voragine that his body was torn with sharp combs of brass till his bowels fell out, and that after this foretaste, this hors d'oeuvre of torture, he was broiled on a gridiron, larded with nails, and basted with the sauce of his own blood. He lay calm, praying while he was being toasted. He remained unmoved, grilling and praying.

Note the rhetoric of *gourmandise*.

Perhaps Durtal's fascination with suffering was based upon his own squeamishness, his awareness that although his spirit was infatuated his flesh was weak. He calls his doubts about submission to the rigors of monastic rule "so human, so vile!" He dreams of an easy monasticism. To any objections raised against his religious aestheticism Huysmans would reply in "Le luxe pour Dieu," published in *De Tout* in 1900, that he applauded Benedictine efforts, at Solesmes and elsewhere, to restore traditional liturgy and plainchant and to surround the Savior with all the *luxe* and *confort* possible. He wanted a sanctified Des Esseintes.

On March 18, 1901, Huysmans himself became an oblate of the Benedictine Abbey of

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Saint Martin de Ligugé, where, within hearing of his beloved plainchant, he could enjoy fine wines in the privacy of his own house and garden, although his dream of founding a colony of Catholic artists there never materialized. He chose this monastery because it was one of the centers for the revival of Church art, and the status of oblate because it was comfortable. While Huysmans was generous and kindly (to fellow Catholics), he never undertook any spiritual exercises, or works of mercy, or penances. He had found his dream of an easy monasticism. In a letter to an unknown person written in 1891, he equates mysticism with Catholic art. He never spoke of a contemplative or unitive experience of God. Mystical experience for him was exclusively the love of Catholic art.

In 1903 he published the last of his Catholic trilogy, *L'Oblat*. One purpose of this book was to castigate the authorities, Catholic and anticlerical alike, who, the year before, out of apathy or hostility, had allowed passage of the bill concerning the Contract of Association that resulted in the closing of the abbey at Ligugé and in Huymans's removal to Paris. But the chief purpose of the book was to explore what Huysmans had long tried to intellectualize and had come to see as the chief problem of human life, the problem of suffering. Here he traces the doctrine of Mystical Substitution to its archetype in the Crucifixion, further aestheticizing the spiritual naturalism of Grünewald and El Greco. He creates an allegory in which suffering is the bride of Christ, crowning Him with "a sweat of rubies, a diadem of bloody pearls." She woos Him with the only charms she has—"atrocious and superhuman torments . . . she examined the lashes of the whips; she increased the weight of the hammers, she made sure the thorns were like spikes, that the vinegar was bitter, that the spears and nails were sharp." Then, after the consummation, she steps down into the world. He associates the Virgin with suffering, and by implication all the female saints and martyrs, so that woman becomes the instrument of salvation or of perdition. Between the extremes there is nothing.

Before *L'Oblat,* in 1901, Huysmans published the *Life of Sainte Lydwine,* of which Durtal had often dreamed. Perhaps the most interesting thing about the book is that he should have written it at all, that he should have marked his shift from pessimism to dolorism by reverting to a medieval genre.

Huysmans chose to write the life of Lydwine of Schiedam because, like the author, she exalted the doctrine of Mystical Substitution. She was born in 1380, the year in which Catherine of Siena died, and Huysmans was persuaded that Lydwine had been appointed by God to carry on the expiatory mission; thus her *Life* would be a mystical exercise. He was also attracted to her because she was Dutch and because she was extravagant in her penances. For these reasons Huysmans underwent an arduous *militia,* preparing himself as Dante did for the *Commedia.* He read numerous saints' lives, especially the more horrifying ones, as well as Thomas à Kempis, Brugman, the Jansenists, the Bollandists, and he even located an eighteenth-century office of the Blessed Lydwine.

Grünewald and El Greco pale beside Lydwine. She suffered every illness known to the Middle Ages except leprosy. Her wounds putrefied and became infested with worms. Erysipelas devoured her right arm so that it was attached to her body by a single muscle. The upper part of her face was an open sore, and she became blind. Then she was struck by the plague. When two eruptions formed, she said that three would be more suitable to honor the Trinity. At once another boil erupted. She prayed for more suffering, to atone for her own sins and those of others, and her prayers were answered. She took no nourishment but the Eucharist. When she died, her putrid sores gave off delightful odors, and her girlhood beauty was restored.

This was spiritual naturalism applied to a person who was emblematic of Mystical Substitution, but it was no medieval saint's life. Despite the harrowing and the miraculous elements, Lydwine is a believable and sympatnetic person in a partially realistic novel, the only one Huysmans wrote after his break with Zola and the *Soirées de Médan.*

It seems that after the Revolution, the uprisings of 1848, the collapse of the Empire in 1870, and the troubles of the fledgling Republic, a bifurcation took place in the intellectual life of France. There were progressive writers—writers who, like Zola, saw in the new urban poor and in the class struggle material for sympathetic didacticism, and

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who hoped for social change. On the other hand, there was Huysmans, who saw the same squalor and disorder as the inevitable decay of postlapsarian human nature and society, and finally, probably, as a manifestation of Original Sin. His repugnance was so extreme that he desperately sought a stable hierarchical world, a safe spiritual edifice. Before his conversion it was the occult. Edouard Dujardin recalled that as early as 1887 he "was struck by the importance that Huysmans attached not yet to religious things, but to what I shall call mysterious things—in other words, anything transcending the tangible and the rational. He used to tell us strange stories about secret cults, werewolves, witchcraft, and satanism. . . . He held seances in his home for friends. . . ."

Huysmans hoped that the occult would give him "some compensation for the horror of daily life, the squalor of existence, the excremental filthiness of the loathesome age we live in." But satanism and the Black Mass, although awesome, lacked beauty, and descended into the very carnal excess that was beginning to repel him. He referred to these things as "the latrines of the supernatural." So he had to find a way to spiritualize, mysticize, and aestheticize (for him these were all equivalent terms). The Middle Ages, he knew, were full of subjects that transmogrified sadomasochism and carnal uncleanness into the sublime. In contrast to his own "Americanized" age, by which he meant mediocrity, minorities, and materialism, he found in the Middle Ages vice and virtue carried to extremes that seemed to him heroic. From Des Esseintes, who made a contemporary retreat from the ugly world into aesthetic sensuality, Huysmans turned to Gilles de Rais, whom he called "a medieval Des Esseintes," and whose own time provided him with the means to explore the uttermost depths of sin as well as the most exacerbated penances. Gilles was the obvious antidote to the nineteenth-century common man idolized by the Naturalists, and so the very person to fascinate Huysmans.

The colonizing period in which Huysmans lived seems to have provided artists with a variety of roles that they might try on, in preference to the roles provided by industrialized bourgeois society. Some artists (such as Douanier Rousseau, another civil servant) traveled to the edge of the modern world and created myths about primal innocence and primal mystery and power. The colonialism of the nineteenth century fostered myths about the unknown, the exotic, the non-self, the European turning savage God-King, and succumbing to the wilderness. In Huysmans's satanism and later Catholicism there is something of the ambiguous attractiveness of the "unspeakable rites" in which Kurtz participates in *Heart of Darkness*. But instead of territorial imperialism, Huysmans chose a kind of historical imperialism, "throwing himself into the abyss of the ages, into the tumultuous spaces of dream and nightmare," where he legitimated his "*amour de l'abîme*" in a return to a mysterious medievalism brimming with excesses of torture and sanctity. And he loved the strange black Madonna of the Crypt with a special surrender.

By the time *Là-bas* appeared, Huysmans was both penitent and proselytizing. He argued convincingly that his shocking novel had in some degree helped him return to the Church, and he hoped that others might be inspired to take the same indirect way, "being pulled in," as he put it, "by the Devil's hooked claw."

Of Huysmans's first Catholic novel, *En Route*, Henri Céard said: "For Huysmans religion is an exotic and beautiful flower which attracts him because he has never seen anything like it in the hothouses of the world." Céard was right; Huysmans was smitten not by the spirit of the Middle Ages but by its artifacts. That is why he had a voyeuristic interest in representations: painting, sculpture, architecture, especially representations of extreme ascetic practices, combined with a bourgeois disinclination to put on a hair shirt himself. As for his misanthropy, his response to foreigners in the Louvre was "Oh, for a bloody massacre!" To Paul Verlaine he wrote, "[Foreigners are] enough to make one vomit." He shared the rightist and anti-Semitic views printed in *La Voix*, the organ of Chartres Cathedral, which castigated Jews, Freemasons, and Protestants for encouraging divorce, cremation of the dead, *lycées* for girls, and other atrocities. For Huysmans, the modern industrial world was a horror, and the monasteries kept the barbarians outside the gates. When he visited Frankfurt, he called it "the capital of Jewry" because of its banks

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and alluring shop windows. When, in 1875, his publisher had to delay publication of Huysmans's review, he wrote to Zola: "the old sheeny has prepared some odious posters and charlatanical puffs." Despite his lifelong affection for Zola, Huysmans refused to attend the *maître*'s funeral because he was sure that the Dreyfusards would turn it into a political occasion. (In *L'Oblat* he had written that the Freemasons and Dreyfusards had advanced socialism by twenty years, and that in fact the whole affair was drummed up by the Jews to attack the Church.) From all this horror the monastery was a refuge, and he chose the Benedictines because they were reviving the medieval arts of the Church.

So much for his charity. As for his becoming an oblate, it circumvented the personal asceticism and hardship of monasticism, which he called "that barracks life." He never dealt with ethical Catholicism and was contemplative only in matters of art. He had indeed cut the roots off this flower and worshiped a sickly efflorescence. He sundered style from substance and adored the former. The great cathedrals and the liturgy were not in themselves objects of worship, but vehicles or *figurae* for medieval people. Nor was their piety affected by the taste of the painter or sculptor, although their senses undoubtedly were. For Huysmans style was beatitude and vulgarity was sin.

Nor did the believer consider suffering beautiful in itself. It taught medieval Christians to endure what was commonly a difficult lot. It enforced their awareness of the immense disproportion between themselves, on the one hand, and Christ and his suffering servants, on the other. It was didactic; it taught a *contemptus mundi* from which Huysmans's pessimism and his dream of an enclosed elite of Catholic artists were very far indeed. For him suffering, like everything else, had to be an artifact, had to have aesthetic distance, in order to be interesting; he never wholly disengaged himself from Des Esseintes. The Church, for Huysmans, was its art; his exclusive emphasis on the thingness of the Church amounted to its profanation.

The emphasis upon art is an extension of the Decadent style. It is Naturalistic, except that it lavishes excessive attention on details at the expense of the whole and, most important, chooses as its subject an artifact rather than society. Indeed Huysmans continued to the end of his days to have a great deal in common with Zola: his passion for documentation, his indifference to plot, his love of walking through squalid sections of Paris, his attraction to disease, even the fact that both men spent most of their lives in rooms that had once been monks' cells. But Huysmans, as we have seen, trained his Naturalist's eye on a very different object. He wanted a stable authoritarian order and he sought a prerevolutionary model. This occurred at a time when the social implications of his misanthropy, his racism, his disgust for the world could only be corporatist. Catholic corporatism is institutionalized nostalgia; Huysmans saw in the Church a social organization that one does not question because it supplies the answers to life's vexing problems. He seems not to have taken into account the fact that medieval guilds and monasteries were social and religious entities consistent with a universal Catholic society, all of which was hierarchically arranged so that class conflict was unimaginable. Further, they were devoted to some form of austere religious exercise. They were not mere safe havens and refuges from social disorder.

Two Catholic doctrines appealed especially to Huysmans: the doctrine of Mystical Substitution and the law of Solidarity in Good. The second persuaded him that his ideal hierarchical "guild" of artists and of art devotees had to be exclusively Catholic. The first helped him to explain in orthodox Catholic terms his lifelong fascination with suffering; it was deliberately undertaken as an artifact because *in itself* it was meritorious, so the beholder could transform his sadistic satisfaction into a religious *frisson*. Moreover, it disposed of the problem of the sufferings of the innocent, which so distressed Zola. The sufferings were not a social injustice; they were a sign of election, of a special sanctity. To a doctor who wrote that no Catholic physician who believed in Mystical Substitution could treat a patient, since he might be thwarting Providence by curing an expiatory victim, Huysmans replied that no one could be cured except by the will of God. He also believed that illnesses could at times be diabolical in origin. He affirmed that Mystical Substitution, although the doctrine was not preached because of its severity, "still remains the essence

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of Catholic belief, the lesson taught us by Calvary, the purest mystical theology."

It is not without a certain aesthetic fitness that this man, whose nervous irritability was such that he could not bear a badly played piano or an inferior cigarette, should have died an agonizing death. God, the divine Decadent, arranged matters so that in 1907 Huysmans died atrociously, of a disease that caused the lower half of his face to putrefy and fall away in chunks. His eyes became so horribly infected that his lids had to be sewn shut. This voyeuristic Catholic "in his piety . . . believed that these eyes, through which he had received so much pleasure, were taken from him by way of enforcing penitence." His death was a perfect *objet d'art*. Like Saint Vincent, he lay still and prayed; he bore his ordeal with patience and stoicism; he refused morphia and all comfort except the solicitude of his friends. He kept his sense of humor; the grotesque element in his plight did not escape him. He kept his sense of style, leaving instructions that he be buried in his Benedictine habit and composing the invitation to his funeral so that it was in impeccable taste. It is not easy to decide whether, like a true Decadent, he orchestrated his own death and funeral, or whether his long immersion in Catholic art had helped him "to throw a little light, however uncertain, upon the dark and terrifying mystery of suffering."

Stock Pot

KATE JENNINGS

I've thrown in this week's leavings: leftovers
spiced with spikes of peppercorns. I splash in
sherry to sweeten the pot, and lean close to see

what I've wrought. The watched pot boils;
I turn it down. A leek, sliced, surfaces,
floating next to a bobbing onion pierced

with cloves. The mixture I've concocted
bubbles up. My wooden spoon might be stirring
a stew brewed over live coals: this spoon

might be splitting the fat on broth brought
to a boil in spite of the huffs of windy weather:
were we gypsies, this stock would be stew.

As it is, the bay leaf bellies up to the carrot
over an electric coil. What I threw in
simmers sedately, ready to cool and freeze.

I stir cracked beef bones, add water and thyme,
and sit back to sniff at and smell the results:
spice, sherry, onions, carrots, turnips: stock.

KATE JENNINGS has recently completed her first novel. Her poetry has appeared in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR and other journals.

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Forsaking the Barn

STEPHEN R. LAWSON

"Summer theater" summons up memories of Gene Kelly exhorting Judy Garland to loan out her barn for the purpose of "putting on a show." Never mind that the show was rotten; it remained, to the amateur eye, "theater"—cheerfully unprofessional, undaunted by obstacles, and unencumbered by lofty aesthetic notions. For non-Broadway managements interested less in a fast buck than in prestige, the approved term is "little theater." Ever since 1914, when Duluth, Minnesota, originated the concept of genuinely ambitious "little theater" in this country, various companies have sought to create a theatrical soil in which dramatic literature could flourish, or at least take root. Soon after Duluth's courageous playhouse began scheduling Shaw and other recondite playwrights, the Provincetown Players took form, anticipating by thirty-five years the off-Broadway movement in New York.

As Broadway continues to decay, recapitulating the dead forms of drama year after year, the primary source of aesthetic nourishment in the United States lies in the degree of boldness found in regional and repertory theaters across the country. Thanks in part to foundation grants and the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965, the last decade or so has seen an explosion of theatrical activity in America. On the Pacific Coast, there are such regional theaters as the Mark Taper Forum, Ashland Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and American Conservatory Theatre; in the Midwest: the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre, Goodman Theater, Cleveland Playhouse, Milwaukee Repertory Company, Indiana Repertory Theater, and Loretto-Hilton Repertory Theatre; in the South: Virginia Museum Theatre, Actors' Theater of Louisville, Center Stage, and the Asolo Theatre; in the Northeast: Arena Stage, Folger Theatre Group, McCarter Theater, American Place Theatre, Chelsea Theater Center, Circle Repertory, Manhattan Theatre Club, and the New York Shakespeare Festival; in New England: Long Wharf, Yale Repertory, Stage West, Trinity Square Repertory, and Hartford Stage Company. And this is merely a partial list of some of the more interesting groups.

With a few exceptions, most of the above-named groups operate on an academic-year schedule; that is, from the fall into late spring. That leaves the summer—and summer theaters. Of these, according to Anne Goodrich's valuable *Enjoying the Summer Theaters of New England* (Pequot Press, 1974), no fewer than twenty-eight Equity (union) theaters in that region alone are active between June and September, plus fifteen or twenty others that pay non-union actors to perform. And this doesn't even take into account the more ambitious theater groups on college campuses like Yale and Dartmouth, much less community theaters and dinner theaters.

Unlike music activities at Tanglewood (founded in 1934) and dance activities at Jacob's Pillow (founded in 1942), drama has gone through enormous changes in the summer theaters of New England. Take the famous Berkshire Playhouse, which in 1928 was ensconced in a Stanford White building built in the 1880s. Since its formation, the Playhouse has gone through various changes of

STEPHEN R. LAWSON is literary manager for both the Williamstown Theatre Festival and New York's Circle in the Square. His criticism has appeared in *Yale/Theatre* (of which he is a contributing editor), the *New Republic*, and in this summer's *American Film*.

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character: first, the era of its resident company, headed by such luminaries as Ethel Barrymore and Eva Le Gallienne; then the period dominated by such men as Arthur Penn and William Gibson; then a few years in which new American plays were tried out; and, since 1972, a Hollywood emphasis on what is known in the trade as star "packages" and "vehicles." The Lenox Arts Center, housed in an Italianate villa since 1971, specializes in new musical theater, mime, and dance, on the order of Muriel Rukeyser's *Houdini*, Eve Merriam's *The Club* (which went on to Circle in the Square off-Broadway), and Elizabeth Swados's *Nightclub Cantata* (which moved to off-Broadway too). In formulating the Center's aesthetic, Lyn Austin, one of the executive directors, speaks of an indigenously American synthesis of theater and music. The company's advantages lie in its strong foundation support and its tiny seating capacity, which means reduced pressure to fill seats.

The Williamstown Theatre Festival, located at the north edge of Berkshire County, has had a different history, but is a sufficiently close exemplar to be taken up here in some detail. Run by the same management since its beginnings in 1955, the theater was made possible by a group of local residents who donated a hundred dollars each to provide a first-season budget for a very Yankee venture: the use of the 479-seat Adams Memorial Theater of Williams College during the summer. Why? To see if drama couldn't do (economically) for northern Berkshire County what music and dance had been doing for more than a decade for South County. After considerable discussion, a board of directors was assembled, and the Williamstown Theatre Foundation was incorporated in November 1954. Money was raised, and a young, Yale-blue, nonprofessional company of twenty assembled to act, direct, design, and build.

Contrary to some dour predictions, the first season attracted no fewer than 17,600 paying customers to ten productions—or 61 percent of capacity. The new theater had some things going for it: local goodwill, its status as the first new summer theater operating in the region for some time, and an intriguing blend of Broadway and typically summer-barn fare: *Gigi*, *Time of the Cuckoo*, *Tovarich*, and *The Rainmaker*, combined with Miller's *The Crucible* and Giraudoux's delicate fable *Ondine*. The second season offered a similar mélange for different tastes. *The Philadelphia Story* alternated with *Saint Joan*; *Mrs. McThing* was on the list, but so was *Tiger at the Gates*. This policy of "cautious daring" paid off in good notices from the press and a jump in box-office receipts. The management jubilantly announced that the theater was now a going concern, and its theme would be "good plays, well done."

The Williamstown Theatre's third season (1957) saw changes being made. The board of directors authorized Nikos Psacharopoulos (its executive director then, as now) to turn the theater into an Equity house. The season was shaved to eight weeks to cut out the dead weekends immediately preceding and following the Tanglewood season. A vestigial workshop for young apprentices was started with contributions from such local residents as Cole Porter. And in 1958, for the first time, the young unknowns who had manned the theater from the start, and chose to turn Equity with it, were supplemented by well-known names from the theatrical marketplace: Mildred Dunnock in *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, Thornton Wilder in his own *Our Town*. Designers such as the late Will Steven Armstrong, who had set the theater's acclaimed visual standards in scenery and costume design, began to receive critical recognition for New York shows. An increased yearning for a national reputation colored Williamstown's next five years. After a financial crisis in 1960 and an emphasis on the quasi serious in 1961 (*Othello*, *J. B.*, *Becket*, *Toys in the Attic*), the theater came up with its most interesting season yet in 1962: Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, hardly the usual summer theater opener, followed by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Tennessee Williams's *Period of Adjustment*, Shelagh Delaney's offbeat *A Taste of Honey*, and—of all things—*The Seagull*. The amazing success of the Chekhov production (judged the most popular play of the season in an autumn poll) proved a milestone, yet simultaneously a blessing and a curse. Henceforth Psacharopoulos, with the tacit blessing of the board, gradually winnowed out the commercial titles and established a company dedicated to fostering the

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modern classics: Ibsen, Chekhov, Pirandello, Brecht, O'Neill, et al. With no little fanfare, 1963 was heralded as "A Festival of Masters," consisting of Shaw, Williams, Albee, O'Neill, Chekhov, Shakespeare, plus *A Far Country*, and *Mr. Booth*, a season-ending musical.

After the heady success of *The Seagull*, a production originally announced with much trepidation, the financial dive of 1963 must have come as a distinct shock to the board and staff. Evidently, audiences and press alike regarded the season's plays as "arty" and "highbrow," but probably it was the almost unrelieved heaviness of the plays that kept the crowds away. *The Night of the Iguana* was about sex and squalor; *The Zoo Story*, harassment and murder; *A Far Country*, Freud and schizophrenia; *Long Day's Journey into Night*, alcoholism and drug addiction; and *The Cherry Orchard*, poverty and eviction. As if this were not enough, the next-to-last production, a compilation whimsically labeled *A Birthday Party for Shakespeare*, was a terrible flop, ostensibly because audiences were eager for a full-length Shakespeare play and got cuttings and vignettes instead. Nor could all the slightly frantic publicity for the closing musical, *Mr. Booth*, lure enough ticket buyers to assure a break-even season. (The title may have conjured up images of Ford's Theatre and Lincoln's murder rather than the lighthearted doings of a remarkable American family.)

Somewhat shaken, the Williamstown Theatre resolved to try a new tack in 1964: repertory. Critics and foundations alike were touting the "rep" concept in the mid-sixties, and preseason polls in the Williamstown area found people greatly interested in the idea of a summer of five or six plays in rotation. The reasoning that went into the decision was that, in repertory, actors can sharpen their skills; visiting tourists can see two or three plays during a long weekend in the Berkshires; and strain on the technical staff will be reduced if only five, rather than eight, plays need to be put on. Also, the theater had reached its tenth anniversary season and tributes were pouring in, so the new system seemed an exciting way to commemorate the occasion. Exciting it may have been, but "a confusing experiment" has been the recurring phrase used ever since to sum up the first repertory season at Williamstown. On balance, the summer fare was lighter than the previous year's—*A Man for All Seasons*, *A Thousand Clowns*, *A View from the Bridge*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *The Fantasticks*—but other forces were at work. Once "the locals" had seen all five shows (say by the end of July or early August), the financial base of the theater went dry. Tourist business simply was not enough to save it. In addition, the schedules confused many people, some shows suffered from abbreviated rehearsal hours, and actors found repertory more of a strain than anyone had assumed back in the spring. In the end, all problems came down to a question of *time*, a matter absolutely central to any discussion of summer theater in America.

The year 1965 saw a reversion to a regular (nonrepertory) season, after a few generous local contributions had paid off the 1964 deficit. The next few years, the late sixties, in the opinion of many regulars, marked the high point of the Williamstown Theatre. By this time a "family" of actors, directors, and designers—names like Stacy Keach, Joyce Ebert, Peter Hunt, Austin Pendleton, John Conklin, and Santo Loquasto—was winning awards and acclaim on and off Broadway and returning annually to Williamstown to appear in modern classics in roles not available to them elsewhere. Through these years, attendance steadily increased to a high of 85 percent of capacity in 1967, a season made up of such plays as *Peer Gynt*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *Saint Joan*, and *A Delicate Balance*. Some changes took place in the fifteenth anniversary season (1969): the two-man director/associate-director system, used since 1955, was abandoned in favor of a corps of four or five associate directors contracted to return to the theater every few years between commitments elsewhere. Plays by Brecht (*Galileo*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Threepenny Opera*) entered the repertoire and scored well.

The season of 1970 was one of the "down" years. The economic recession that year led people to forgo theater and attend movies instead. Preseason complications obliged Psacharopoulos to direct the first two productions back-to-back within three weeks—resulting in personal exhaustion and a stodgy, soporific *Streetcar Named Desire*. A tribute to new American playwrights (hitherto neglected in the search for modern classics) in the shape of

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Sam Shepard's *Operation Sidewinder* was stunningly designed but erratically acted, and greeted with equal parts of rage, bewilderment, and indifference by audiences. Owing to budget difficulties, the season's final production, *Guys and Dolls* had only a small sum for sets and costumes; yet because of demonic work and prayer, the designer somehow made it all look, move, and feel like the spirit of Damon Runyan incarnate.

At the start of the 1971 season, a hugely successful production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*—with Frank Langella, an actor of veteran status in Williamstown and fresh from his film performance as the writer in *Diary of a Mad Housewife*—more than compensated for the pallidly received *Birthday Party* that followed. (For one solid week, Psacharopoulos wandered through my office, muttering, "We are losing our shirts on Pinter!") Similarly, a jovial version of Neil Simon's *Plaza Suite* paid for the smaller houses that greeted Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* and Brecht's *Mother Courage.*

Then came 1972—in my opinion the crucial year in the development of the Williamstown Theatre. A battle raged in the local press over the so-called cream puff vs. caviar issue: whether difficult or abstruse plays should be included in the season schedule at the expense of moneymaking titles. (Back-to-back productions of Schiller's *Mary Stuart* and Simon's *Last of the Red Hot Lovers* provided perfect fuel for the controversy over whether art or commerce should dominate.) Ironically, the issue was quenched by Peter Hunt's spectacularly inventive staging of Brecht's rarely done *Arturo Ui*—a "caviar" work given an exciting production. As the *New York Times* asked rhetorically in a feature on the Williamstown Theatre that July, how would conservative Berkshire vacationers react to a Marxist parable? The ex post facto reply: "The applause was tumultuous." According to Psacharopoulos, the triumph of *Arturo Ui* vindicated the theater's policies. (Some tangible support for this view: *Red Hot Lovers* attracted fewer customers than *Arturo Ui* or the revival of *Uncle Vanya* later in the summer.) However, debate flared again at the end of the season when, in an effort to save money, the management canceled the traditional musical and brought back Kaufman and Hart's *Once in a Lifetime.* None of the explanations—that the high royalty costs of any musical would mean a money-losing week even at 100 percent capacity, that many potential customers had been turned away from *Lifetime* in July and here was their chance to see it, that Hurricane Agnes's disastrous effect on the early part of the season had to be made up—seemed to persuade. A fair number of old-timers from the immediate area drifted away from a theater that seemed to them to have moved too far from its local beginnings and its roots in the community.

For the first time since the Apprentice Workshop was begun in 1957 the Williamstown Theatre was expanding. A "Second Company" of young, gifted nonprofessionals was formed to bring unusual plays at no cost to people who were unlikely or unable to get to the main stage productions. Büchner's *Woyzeck* was performed in an experimental space, Brecht's *Elephant Calf* in a day camp, a six-man *Peer Gynt* at a drug rehabilitation center, Boccaccio's *Decameron* in a public park, Brecht's *Drums in the Night* at an old people's home. Suddenly the Williamstown Theatre was a foundation-backed enterprise. The Second Company was wholly supported by federal and state contributions, which in turn were matched locally, and it was doing two new things: taking the theater to people as well as luring people to one theatrical space, and publicizing a subsidiary ensemble as the aesthetic cutting edge of the entire operation. Very quickly the new group began to acquire its own peculiar reputation. First, the *quality* of production, despite minimal funds, was often judged the equal of, or even superior to, the more traditional productions on the main stage. Second, the shows were free. By current standards, Williamstown Theatre mainstage seats are not expensive (ranging from $2.50 to $7.50). Still, in lean times what potential theatergoer might not choose to attend a performance by a reputable young troupe, especially for nothing, rather than pay to see another, perhaps only slightly better, troupe? (It would be interesting and, I believe, valuable, to conduct a survey to find out whether the Second Company actually pulls customers away from the main stage productions.)

Since 1972, the Williamstown Theatre's ambitions have grown increasingly national

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in scale, orientation, and ambition. New programs have been added—a late-night cabaret, a three-year directors' training program, an acting assistants' ensemble midway between the Apprentice Workshop and the Equity company. In 1973, there were several minor theatrical coups: the American premiere of the modern-dress version of Molière's *Misanthrope*; a new musical about Oscar Wilde, *Nobody's Earnest*, with a score by Alec Wilder; and the importation of the entire New York production of David Storey's *The Changing Room* to close the season. (Whether it was the Broadway cast, made up of ten Williamstown Theatre alumni, or the onstage nudity that pulled in the crowds became a moot point in the avalanche of ticket orders.) Yet despite all this, attendance for the season was down, thanks to the poor response to Brecht's *Good Woman of Setzuan* and Joe Orton's *What the Butler Saw*, a wonderfully savage comedy assailed in scores of outraged letters as pornographic.

In recent years the puzzling up-down pattern of aesthetic and financial success has continued. In box-office terms, the 1974 season was the best to date (87 percent attendance). It opened to approving noises from the *Times* ("Many of the finest actors in America have been seen in some of the world's finest plays at the Williamstown Theatre Festival"), encomiums from actors and politicians, and an all-star revival of *The Seagull*. Chekhov proved a winner for the third time, with 99.6 percent attendance (23 vacant seats out of 5,748 for the run). Jubilation and critical huzzahs were followed by an offer from PBS-TV to shoot the production the following week for "Theatre in America" in Williamstown. Next came a new version of *Threepenny Opera* with Raul Julia and Donna McKechnie (98.5 percent), then Sheridan's *The Rivals*, O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!*, a musical of *Juno and the Paycock* (with Milo O'Shea and Geraldine Fitzgerald), and John Guare's new play, *Rich and Famous*. No show fell below 75 percent (the musical did worst of all!), and the final figure of 87 percent still appears extraordinary for so unusual a summer theater schedule.

Then came near-disaster. *Ring Round the Moon* (Mildred Dunnock, Blythe Danner, Frank Langella) opened the 1975 season, breaking more records. After that the customers stopped coming, and Christopher Hampton's *Savages* bombed catastrophically. Whether people refused to get interested in a play about power, kidnapping, and mass extinction (which could also describe *Arturo Ui*, the hit of two years earlier), or whether the title was discouraging, nobody could tell for certain. In any case, the Williamstown Theatre was now in financial trouble, into which it waded deeper because of a pre-season decision to run *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* for not one week, but two. Even Ken Howard in the title role could not fill seats. Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, so successful in 1967, fared badly at the box office in revival, while Gorky's *Enemies*—an attempt to vary the by-now traditional cycle of Chekhov plays—did just passably well. It took *The Man Who Came to Dinner* to bring back the crowds, and suddenly the Williamstown Theatre found itself in the uncomfortable position of relying for its life on the attraction of a solid but very commercial comedy.

Those were interesting times to be working at Williamstown. One found oneself worried yet oddly detached, unsure of whether this might be the end of the line. I had become the theater's literary manager two years before, and in this critical period I began (perhaps out of arrogance) to cavil at the choice of plays. Why *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, and why for *two* weeks? To which I could only answer, why not? Who could have predicted its failure, or that of *Savages* (the publicity for which had read: ". . . from the director who staged *Arturo Ui!*")? Questions like this nagged me during the fall and early winter of 1975, as the emergency drive for funds lumbered on. Many small checks were sent in, accompanied by admonishing letters: despair at the thought of the theater's demise, good advice (advance the curtain time; improve promotion techniques), bad advice (no more Chekhov, Brecht, or Ibsen), irrelevant advice (white gloves on ushers; turn up the air conditioners; turn off the air conditioners). Ultimately, enough donations came in to pay off the deficit and assure a twenty-second summer in 1976, which proved to be another conundrum. Attendance bounded back to 75 percent of capacity—with such plays as *Heartbreak House* and *The Three Sisters* scoring strongly; *Born Yesterday* (commercial comedy) doing less well; and Tony Shaffer's

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Sleuth, O'Neill's *A Touch of the Poet*, and Williams's *Orpheus Descending* (strange bedfellows!) doing poorly. *Our Town*, which ran for two weeks, did better at the box office than anything else. In the words of the confused monarch in *The King and I*: "Is a puzzlement."

So much for the production history of the Williamstown Theatre. It is not, of course, a singular phenomenon, but some such background is necessary, I think, before any conclusions can be drawn—or even guessed at—concerning the aesthetic and financial difficulties that any ambitious summer theater faces today. At Williamstown, as at the Goodspeed Opera House, or the short-lived Nantucket Stage Company, or the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, the old days of let's-put-on-a-show have passed irretrievably in the face of the culture boom prevailing in this country since World War II. The American theatergoer today, if not more appreciative of new trends in drama, is readier to accept them or at least try them out. Where his horizons may once have stopped at Tennessee Williams or O'Neill, they may now extend to Pinter, or even Chekhov or Genet.

The theatergoer's next step is to go beyond dutiful attendance to active discrimination—to making intelligent judgments and ascertaining genuine values. This is relevant to the problems faced by Williamstown and any other summer theater that shares its energy, scope, seriousness, and reputation. How do you balance economic demands with the (no less rigorous) requirements of dramatic art? Where is the line to be drawn? And, in the light of Williamstown's uneven history, what line are we talking about? If Rostand's *Cyrano* draws 100 percent attendance, does that mean the management should rush to include Rostand's *Chantecler* the following summer? No—first because *Chantecler* is almost unknown in the United States and, second, it is not a very good play. If Brecht's *Arturo Ui* plays to 88 percent, why not schedule *The Good Woman of Setzuan* the next season? But then suppose that, despite a very favorable press, the better Brecht play draws only 66 percent? How does the art/commerce issue fit in here? What are the deciding factors? If *The Birthday Party* fares indifferently, does that mean no Pinter play can ever be risked again? Yet any theater whose artistic sights are set higher than the surefire drawing power of, say, Neil Simon must take risks.

But the question may be put more concretely than that. Michael Feingold, reviewing *Ring Round the Moon* unfavorably for the *Village Voice* in July 1975, argued that no summer theater, however courageous, can reasonably aspire to genuine artistic excellence, in the face of limited time for rehearsals, overlapping schedules, frenetic technical demands, heat, and exhaustion. Is it enough, Feingold implied, to offer great plays from world literature under less than optimum conditions? "Summer theater," in his judgment, emerges as an oxymoronic activity, a contradiction in terms. Still, good productions of either modern classics or new works are not so common that a worthy attempt should be casually dismissed. I've seen remarkable productions done by ten-week-season summer companies: an outstanding *Dracula* designed by Edward Gorey; a fine updated version of *Tartuffe;* an affectionately presented *Tempest*—all rehearsed and mounted in three weeks or less. Shows rehearsed for as long as six weeks have opened in a condition best described as underfed; twelve-day productions have deserved praise from customers and critics alike.

What do many well-established summer theaters face in the future? Let us return to the Williamstown Theatre. As a friend (and occupant) of the house, I feel sure that it will soon have to stop jerry-building and take stock of its future priorities. Since 1972, the operation has grown in all directions, to the detriment of time and energy. Although this is an artistic organization that has broken even on sixteen seasons and lost money on just five (discounting the first season), its financial problems are—and figure to remain—a constant headache. Apprentices pay $750 or more to join the theater for a summer, but bills for housing and board at Williams College eat up any profit from their presence. Staff salaries are low: only the theater's reputation for interesting plays and productions lures managers and assistants back season after season. Despite foundation support, ticket sales account for an extremely high 80 percent of income; a bad week can jeopardize an entire season. Neither a strictly "tourist attraction," because of its local friends, patrons,

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and sponsors, nor a strictly regional theater, because a high proportion of its audiences comes from outside New England, Williamstown must soon decide just where it intends to go.

There is *never* enough money, even when you take into account a dedicated staff and resourceful designers. Then there is the question of winter management: nobody is retained on full-time salary to follow through on the summer's bills and to plan ahead for the coming season. Therefore, limited responsibilities must be farmed out to managers from the past season, whose helpfulness varies with the strain of their regular winter jobs. Another financial problem is that, with a few exceptions, the theater's board of directors is composed wholly of Berkshire County residents. They are a fine source of local funds, but to get big money from large corporations and foundations, discrete names from the national arts are needed. As is true of any art today, time and money form the perimeters of our theaters. Only healthy doses of both will enable the most ambitious summer companies to "put on a show" that not only entertains but contributes significantly to dramatic art.

The Green Bottle, the Road, the Dream

JAMES PAUL

Years later, the green glass bottle
My Uncle Hunter set in the fork
Of the sycamore needs no guardian.
Only one end protrudes, hard and clear,
From the scar where the trunks have healed;
It is gathered in, the tree's own knot.
The road above the river where I live
Now, shows clearly, and at dusk
Especially, how the joined woods
Would look without the road.
Two groves of oak reunited,
A gully renewed, the hill uncut.
The road, at these times in twilight,
Seems hard and pinched like that bottle,
The grain of wood barely parting around it.
These things are like your dream,
Consistent in spite of everything.
The clear shaft to the new place remains
To take us back to the old dream.
We are careless, we have forgotten,
We are exhausted, and the passageway remains.
We can return and we aren't remembered;
The scar where the dream was cut
Has healed us, and the passage is clear.

✪ JAMES PAUL's poems have recently appeared in the *Paris Review*, *The New Yorker*, and other journals. This poem recently won an Academy of American Poets prize.

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Black Conjugations

JAMES D. ANDERSON

THE BLACK FAMILY IN SLAVERY AND FREEDOM, 1750–1925. *By Herbert G. Gutman. Pantheon. $15.95.*

In his extraordinary book, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, Herbert G. Gutman, a well-known scholar of Afro-American and American working-class history, concerns himself with the evolution and structure of the Afro-American family from 1750 to 1925, the origins and early development of Afro-American culture, and the beliefs and behavior of a distinctive lower-class population. Certainly the book contains significant work in all three areas, but there are boundaries within which Gutman makes his best contributions. Partly the study was initiated to question Daniel Patrick Moynihan's "The Negro Family—The Case for National Action," which argued that enslavement largely destroyed family and kinship beliefs among blacks, and that the typical postbellum Afro-American family was matriarchal, deviant, and generally disorganized. Gutman's response to the Moynihan report significantly shaped his own study.

For the most part, this book deals with a detailed examination of black household structures, family-naming practices, marital rules, sexual behavior, kinship and quasi-kinship networks, and the struggle of slaves and ex-slaves to maintain significant family ties in spite of oppressive environments. Making extensive use of plantation records, marriage registers, military population censuses, and the United States Census reports, Gutman successfully challenges the traditional view that slavery and postslavery oppression virtually destroyed the black family. He demonstrates convincingly that two-parent nuclear households have been the norm in Afro-America since the mid-eighteenth-century slave communities. Hence the study, which also includes important findings on Afro-American and working-class culture, concentrates primarily on the structure of the black household during slavery and the sixty years after the general emancipation.

The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom begins with an examination of the household structures and familial beliefs of ex-slaves in Virginia, North Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky between 1863 and 1866. Although these Afro-Americans had experienced slavery in very different economic, social, and demographic settings, Gutman found that the head of the typical family was a male ex-slave who had been either a common laborer or a field hand. Further investigation revealed that settled marriages and two-parent households predominated in all types of black communities during and immediately after the Civil War. These findings, which contradict the traditional view of the formation of the black family, naturally posed new questions about the impact of North American slavery on black familial associations and cultural beliefs. Convinced that the typical ex-slave family was representative of blacks' earlier adaptation to enslavement, Gutman set out to connect the families of the last slave generation with their ancestors who lived in the century preceding emancipation. He traced the roots of the black family to the mid-eighteenth century, when African and Anglo-American cultural beliefs and social practices blended to form a distinctive Afro-American culture with its own standards for courtship, mar-

JAMES D. ANDERSON is an assistant professor of history of education at the University of Illinois. He has written various articles on black educational history and Afro-American historiography, and is currently writing a book on industrial philanthropy and black education from 1867 to 1935.

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riage, kinship ties, quasi-kinship relations, and domestic arrangements.

Gutman, like other historians, was unable to construct a coherent picture of the formative development of Afro-American culture. Since the African and European cultures that met in the mid-eighteenth century remain largely unstudied, we have no concrete knowledge of the cultural dynamics of the Afro-Americanization process. To Gutman's credit, however, he breaks with the traditional story of Africans encountering gracious gentlemen and cultured ladies in big houses on large plantations. More than half of all slaves sold to mainland North America arrived between 1740 and 1780. They entered into a developing Anglo-American colonial slave society where from half to two-thirds of the white families were "small-fry" farmers who lived in shacks and possessed only the bare essentials of daily living. Scattered evidence suggests that these 210,000 slaves, sold mainly to the Maryland and Virginia colonies, were purchased by whites of small means. In Caroline County, Virginia—the county with the state's largest slave population—the wealthiest families failed to register a single newly acquired African with the county court after 1732. The chief buyers were small planters, tavern keepers, sailors, horse traders, small-time speculators, road supervisors, and others of similar status. It is doubtful that these slaveowners had the same social and cultural practices as did those "to the manor born." About half of the white population south of New England had non-English origins, and large numbers had entered the colonies as either voluntary or involuntary bound servants. Thus, as Gutman suggests, we may learn that significant numbers of Africans adapted to and learned New World cultural beliefs and social practices from slaveowners "whose immediate social origins had their roots in nonelite European and Southern white lower- and middle-class cultures." Hardly anything is yet known about the moral codes, sexual behavior, marital rules, kinship ties, and domestic arrangements of this slave-owning class, and even less is known about the cultural baggage that the slaves brought with them from Africa. Hence we cannot speak concretely about the Afro-Americanization process as long as the cultural forms that fused to transform Africans into Afro-Americans remain largely uncharted.

Nevertheless, Gutman knows that we cannot understand Afro-American culture apart from the developing Anglo-American society. Eugene Genovese, in the *Times Literary Supplement* (February 25, 1977), has charged that Gutman denies "a profound white impact on black culture" and moves "perilously close to asserting an impossible total autonomy for black culture." On the contrary, Gutman insists that "an interaction between Anglo-American slave society and Afro-American slave culture shaped slave behavior, and an understanding of the two serves as a starting point in any analysis of slave belief and behavior." He may not have developed this to Genovese's satisfaction but clearly he is not theoretically confused about the relationship of black family and culture to the larger social texture of enslavement. Genovese is also wrong in stating that Gutman "arrives at the incredible conclusion that the slaveholders imparted nothing of importance to the culture of the slaves and indeed made no attempt to do so." Gutman informs us that "many owners . . . encouraged the formation of completed slave families," and certainly he regards that as an important contribution. Yet he is not convinced that plantation slavery molded blacks and whites into a single people with a common southern identity.

Rather, Gutman demonstrates that the eighteenth-century Africans living within a brutal slave system eventually hammered out a new cultural pattern of their own. Before the War of Independence, and well before plantation slavery spread from the upper to the lower South, blacks had adapted to and absorbed the shocks of enslavement. Most important, the eighteenth-century slaves forged a strong family and comprehensive kinship system that had enduring consequences for future slave and ex-slave generations. As Gutman explains:

> Slave children born in the 1840s or 1850s grew up in a slave community made up of interrelated but well-defined immediate families. Such ties rooted them in a shared Afro-American past and helped define the identity of particular men, women, and children, allowing slave children to absorb values from parents, grandparents, and other adult kin, and adult non-kin. They were not socialized simply by an owner or an overseer; the choices they

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later made as adults were shaped by socializing experiences rooted within the developing slave community.

The most important aspect of slave familial and kinship beliefs was that young Afro-Americans were not solely dependent on their masters' cultural ideas and values. Gutman shows how the slaves skillfully created beliefs and standards that set them apart from those who had power over them. In the slave community, for example, cousins almost never married because Afro-American moral codes forbade marriage between blood kin as incestuous, but the marriage of cousins was widely practiced by the masters. Clearly, the slaves had not copied the cousin-marriage taboo from their owners because no such taboo existed among whites. Such evidence shows that some marital rules among slaves and their owners had independent histories. Thus, significant slave cultural patterns did not represent an imitation of Anglo-American norms.

The distinctive beliefs and practices of the Afro-American family were evident in patterns of sexual behavior, conjugal unions, and kinship networks as well. Gutman discovered that prenuptial intercourse was tolerated among slaves and no stigma was attached to illegitimacy. Slaves, however, did not consider prenuptial intercourse licentious or subversive of marriage, but rather as "a prelude to a settled marriage," and most slaves who engaged in premarital sex spent their adult lives in settled unions. "If a permanent marriage had not been the expected norm," Gutman argues, "there should have been many more unmarried mothers under the age of thirty." In permanent, monogamous households children learned of family history, of kinship and quasi-kinship ties, and of social obligations to the larger society. They learned that they were a part of an extended family that included grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. When blood kinship was lacking, particularly for children who were sold to distant plantations, quasi-kinship arrangements helped slaves to form a sense of family identity. Children were taught to call all adult slaves "aunt" and "uncle," and this practice committed slaves to networks of mutual obligation that extended beyond blood-kinship relations. These enlarged kinship and quasi-kinship networks served significantly to reflect and shape a social identity independent of the masters' civilization. Gutman shows, for instance, how slaves passed down their surnames while owners rarely knew their slaves even had surnames. Such a record reveals how slaves strove to affect their own history, to maintain an awareness of a developing and changing Afro-American community, and to withstand the oppression of slavery.

Yet, in spite of the slaves' unrelenting struggle to maintain strong and permanent nuclear families, New World slavery did not promote the development of "stable" black families. The Africans purchased by eighteenth-century farmers had been torn away from their families by slave traders. The small slaveholders became successful planters by breaking up another generation of slave families, obtaining a large labor force thereby, and then encouraging its natural reproduction. When slave-based export agricultural production shifted from the upper to the lower South, slave families were forcibly uprooted, and the process of family disruption was continued.

This cycle of family destruction, construction, and dispersal lasted more than two centuries. Consequently, as Gutman remarks, "Slave parents everywhere had good reasons to socialize their children to prepare for either the possible breakup of their marriage or sale from an immediate family." The Mississippi marriage registration books for 1864–65 revealed that for ex-slave registrants twenty years and older, one in six had been separated from a spouse by force. Among registrants aged thirty and older, nearly one in four men and one in five women had suffered forced separation. Significantly, the presence of children in slave families did not deter the owners from separating husbands and wives. In fact, a higher percentage (48 percent) of men whose marriages had produced children reported a forcible breakup, compared with men who had childless marriages (45 percent). Married women with children and without children reported exactly the same percentage (34 percent) of forcible separations from husbands. And this only describes the involuntary breakup of marriages—not of families, which would include the sale of children and relatives. American slavery retained

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its grimmest quality, "the breakup of marriages and the damage thereby inflicted on husbands and wives, parents and children." Ultimately, all slave families were insecure because no slaves could predict when estate divisions, reallocation of investment, or an owner's death would cause involuntary breakups among them.

One important limitation of Gutman's study is the failure to chart adequately the strong tensions that must have prevailed between slave culture and slave society as a result of the slavemasters' general disregard for Afro-American familial and kinship ties. True, some masters did encourage unified slave families, but Gutman maintains that the slave-owning class in general was indifferent to the specific domestic arrangements existing in the quarters, and was hardly aware of the slaves' attempt to maintain a stable monogamy and elaborate kinship networks. The masters' practice of breaking up marriages and families by force, Gutman tells us, caused the slaves "deep personal and social pain," but he does not assess the impact of the tension between slaves' family interests and masters' goals on the black communal consciousness of bondage. He theorizes that "kin and quasi-kin obligations often militate against the development of 'class consciousness,'" thus suggesting that the Afro-American familial and kinship system had a conservative influence in the slave quarters. Indeed, he contends that "in certain settings, slave family obligations may have strengthened ties to an owner as contrasted with ties to fellow slaves." The book provides no evidence, however, that links domestic arrangements to the larger white or black communities. As Gutman makes clear, his sources deal primarily with separate households, which reveal little information about connections between households or about aspects of the community structure. The study also fails to show how the black family interacted with other slave institutions like the Church. Hence we cannot assume that the family formed the model for the larger structure of authority and consciousness. Slave revolts, for example, were not those of families or kinship networks writ large. The author, of course, recognizes that family and kinship systems "do not explain either the full range of slave beliefs and behavior or their origins."

The book's demographic emphasis, which shatters the traditional mythology of the one-parent black household, naturally slants the study away from considerations of the internal or qualitative aspects of black family life over long periods of time. At some important points, the quantitative picture is enriched with literary sources, such as letters, slave narratives, and black testimony given to government commissions, but most of Gutman's evidence yields information about household structures and kinship patterns. The quantitative sources, he explains, tell "very little about many of the customary relations regulating behavior between household members, including such matters as sexual behavior, childrearing practices, sibling relations, the reckoning of descent, and the roles of adult men and women within families." The study therefore reveals little about the historical influence of the domestic environment on the black child's developmental process, on adult sex-role differentiation, or on the moral and social beliefs that a typical slave or ex-slave household attempted to foster during different historical periods. It is extremely difficult, therefore, to determine the extent to which the slaves' family life conformed to their own cultural beliefs and moral perceptions as opposed to the demands of slave society.

The problem of distinguishing slave beliefs from slave behavior is apparent in the question of premarital sex. Gutman informs us that "pressures within the slave system encouraged early childbirth among slave women," and consequently premarital sex and pregnancy. He also demonstrates convincingly that prenuptial intercourse was not subversive of marriage. Still, what was the slaves' moral judgment of this practice? Gutman argues that they did not consider prenuptial intercourse "licentious." His own evidence, however, gives us good reason to think otherwise, or at least to recognize competing moral codes in the slave community. He shows that the black church in Beaufort, South Carolina, for at least a quarter of a century before the Civil War, punished slaves guilty of fornication. Such contemporary observers as Mary Chesnut and Robert Smalls testified that black slave preachers opposed premarital sex and pregnancy. "If they are not married—and show they ought to be," said Chesnut, "out of the church they go."

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Gutman provides no evidence to show that slaves judged premarital sex and pregnancy as morally sound social behavior. Instead he shows that prenuptial intercourse was the expected norm. To understand the quality of slave family life, however, we need to grasp the slaves' subjective view of the "expected norm," especially when it arose from pressures within the slave system.

Occasionally, Gutman seeks to understand the slaves' "latent beliefs" by observing postbellum blacks, who exercised more of the choices available to other Americans. He argues that "slave patterns of courtship, sexual behavior, and mating continued into the early decades of the twentieth century." Drawing upon Charles S. Johnson's study of black rural families in the 1930s, *Shadow of the Plantation*, Gutman maintains that the beliefs and behavior patterns described therein had been common among blacks since the late eighteenth century. Yet Gutman and Johnson disagree on the central question of whether permanent marriage was the expected norm following prenuptial sex. Johnson asserted that prenuptial sex was "lightly censured or excused entirely," but he was not convinced that it was a prelude to settled marriage. On the contrary, he found that when prenuptial sex led to pregnancy, "it is not socially imperative that marriage follows."

To be sure, Gutman's study contributes more to our understanding of black family patterns than do previous works. Yet his findings on black behavior patterns are not sufficiently supported by a detailed analysis of slave and ex-slave beliefs. Consequently, we do not get a coherent picture of the moral standards by which Afro-Americans used to praise, tolerate, or condemn various patterns of courtship, sexual behavior, marriage, and child rearing. When we know more about the extent to which blacks were satisfied with these arrangements, we can better address the question of their family stability. And such an assessment of how they perceived their domestic arrangements requires a more extensive examination of slave narratives, black autobiographies, church rules, social organizations, and general Afro-American folklore.

Gutman ends his work by demonstrating that the typical black family between 1880 and 1925, in the rural South or the urban North, was lower class in status and headed by two parents. Throughout the book he shows that oppressive social circumstances did not destroy blacks' capacity to adapt and sustain vital family and kinship associations. In so doing, he shatters the previous sociological and historical interpretations which held that centuries of exploitation had produced a matriarchal black family. Some of his arguments are not novel or startling in themselves, but past studies have been too thin and surveylike to have the force of Gutman's book. Gutman provides a great deal of information about the black family and furnishes the reader with a coherent analytical framework by which to understand its development. Certainly the Moynihan report has been laid to rest. Gutman, however, offers much more than a refutation of Moynihan's report. He recognizes that the family was one of the central binding institutions within the Afro-American communities and that much of black culture was sustained and defined by familial linkages. A solid study of the black family is necessary to support a sound and developing Afro-American historiography. For certain questions about family stability and the internal socialization process, Gutman's work represents a beginning, not the final study.

Finally, it is important to point out that Gutman builds on the scholarship of other writers and he is well aware of this fact. Contrary to Genovese's charge in the *TLS*, he does not denigrate the labor of his predecessors and colleagues in order "to puff up his claims to an originality attainable only in Heaven and in the blurbs of publishers." From the outset Gutman acknowledges the education and assistance he received from other historians and social scientists. We know that he is not claiming "revolutionary findings" when he tells us that "Exaggeration of the importance of the male-absent slave family was first seriously criticized in Bobby Frank Jones's [1965 Ph.D. dissertation]." Throughout the book Gutman recognizes that he has profited from the works of many scholars. Yet he has found reason to dispute assumptions and analyses in the works of his colleagues and predecessors. His serious discussions of the various models used to explain slave behavior in historical studies should

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prove very useful for historians who are more interested in scholarly debate than membership in what Genovese calls the "unusual community of scholars."

Where Have All the Flowers Gone?

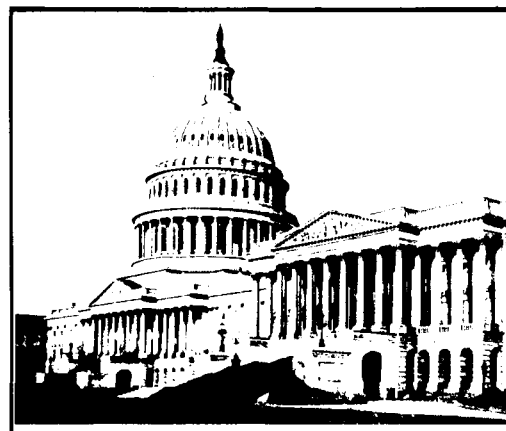
THE SORCERER OF BOLINAS REEF. *By Charles Reich. Random House. $8.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM NICHOLS

The Sorcerer of Bolinas Reef is an autobiography and a call for revolution in which Charles Reich names himself as a legatee of Walt Whitman. It is a position for which he has rather impressive credentials. Like the Whitman of *Leaves of Grass,* he has absorbed life in New York City and Washington, D.C., felt transformed by a conversion experience, rejected conventional patterns of success, offended the sensibilities of respectable acquaintances, discovered his capacity for androgynous sexuality, and developed a vision of America's future. But Reich's book reflects no joy in language, no comic delight in the wonders of the self, no confident mastery of the sweeping range of American life, no celebration of the imagination's power—in short, none of the energy of *Leaves of Grass.* Instead, it is sad testimony to the blunting power of desperation in our intellectual life.

Charles Reich is obviously an intelligent and troubled man who believed what he heard in the 1960s about the absolute corruption of the system. His unhappiness as a successful Washington lawyer, as a friend of Supreme Court justices, and then as a popular Yale professor seemed proof enough. So Reich turned to the counter-culture—not the complicated version of, say, Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture,* but a much simpler, more schematic version he helped to popularize in *The Greening of America* (1970), in which rock music, bell-bottoms, long hair, and consciousness expansion are the very cutting edge of revolution. Since 1970 Reich has been building what he

WILLIAM NICHOLS has been a teacher and administrator at Denison University in Ohio since 1966. He is the author of *Writing from Experience,* a textbook on autobiographical writing.



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understands to be a "philosophy of liberation." But this philosophy places little emphasis on understanding what it rebels against, and the ironic consequence is that it does not actually rebel at all. Consider, for example, his use of terms like "support system," "mind expansion," "flow," "connection," and "positive intervention." Such words, the foundation of Reich's attempt to be a radical critic of our society, are more than just the empty beer cans of our mass-mediated intellectual life. Drawn for the most part from the technology of communications and applied to complicated social and psychological problems, these are terms that almost invariably mechanize and oversimplify what it means to be fully human.

Or consider the slippery word at the heart of Reich's autobiographical vocabulary, "alienation." "What I propose," he says, "is nothing less than a revolution against alienation itself—a revolution that is as necessary in the industrial communist and socialist countries as it is in our own nation." Reich has listened to the critics of *The Greening of America* who said his kind of revolution had nothing to do with political reality, and he wants to make it clear that "alienation," as he uses it, takes in much more than the estrangement of individuals from important parts of themselves and their society:

> The great concerns of today include injustice to oppressed people, the inequality of women and men, the abandonment of democracy and liberty in favor of lawless, authoritarian rule, and the trend toward wanton violence. I believe that change brought about by fighting individual alienation and by growth will directly confront, combat, and overcome these threats to human civilization.

But the truth is that for Reich, as for such young American protagonists as Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield, society is just one giant conspiracy against innocence and freedom. The best a sensitive individual can do is salvage isolated moments of beauty from the brutality of it all and dream of a better day—or fight alienation with alienation.

Reich's inability to show the relationship between his own unhappiness and our society's failures is apparent in his account of his Berkeley conversion experience. He had been teaching at the Yale Law School for several years after leaving Washington, and in the summer of 1967 he impulsively went to Berkeley for a rest. Living there in a borrowed apartment near the university, he gradually came to view himself as an artist among fellow artists. Then, one Sunday morning as he lay alone in bed, Reich experienced his "Turning":

> I could lie there and float. I could lie there and be lifted. I could lie there and be touched and cared for. Life, energy, warmth—they could flow into me. . . . I could be open, so that life would act upon me. I could be able to listen, to feel, to see—to stop talking, forcing, controlling, worrying, making impressions, being approved of. To stop being an intellectual who judges and criticizes and appraises and compares but cannot be moved or changed or touched, who cannot see or feel or hear or know.

This turning away from the life of the intellectual, as Reich understood it, was surely what gave *The Greening of America* its pitch of certitude in 1970, and four years later it apparently led him to resign his position at Yale and return to California.

But beyond the move to the West Coast, which is hardly a radical act for an American, it is difficult to see how the conversion altered Reich's troubled relations with society. He believes that the transformation made him unacceptable to the institutions he used to serve, but he offers no evidence. One suspects that, in fact, even Reich's old Washington law firm could accept the embroidered shirts, the ruffled and curly hair, and the circumspectly gay behavior he claims to have adopted in California. For Yale University such changes would be no problem at all, and it is difficult to find anything more subversive in Reich's account of his changed life. He believes that his relations with individuals have been as profoundly altered as his relations with institutions. He tells, for instance, of a recent friendship with a young man in San Francisco. "To allow a much younger person to function as my parent," he concludes, "was a radical innovation—it ignored all the rules of age and status." But Reich forgets: that is precisely the pattern he describes in relationships with young people throughout his adult life. It governed his friendship with a teenager in Washington who taught him to appreciate rock 'n' roll culture, and it was

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characteristic of his relationships with Yale students who taught him, among other things, how to smoke marijuana.

Reich's sense of a link between American society's failures and the emptiness of his own success surely has much truth in it. But his inability to see his own life clearly does great harm to him as an autobiographer and, ultimately, as a social critic. The lack of clarity may be one result of his effort to "stop being an intellectual," but the irony is that he has come to engage the world around him as a sterile abstraction. Thus, he describes the ethos of Berkeley in 1967: "People just seemed happy and satisfied in Berkeley. The mailman was not the bitter, cynical, dissatisfied man, ready to pour out grievances if invited, that I would expect to encounter in New Haven. He seemed to enjoy both his job and life in general." Such a description lacks the texture of concrete human experience, and the same abstract nimbus envelops Reich's descriptions of lawyers in Washington, professors at Yale, and young people everywhere. Even his memories of important friendships with Hugo Black and William O. Douglas are touched more by abstraction than by affection.

The Sorcerer of Bolinas Reef moves finally into abstract incantation, and the title represents a desperate effort to give it a solid context. Interspersing italicized lines from Whitman's "Song of the Open Road," Reich offers a verbal portrait of himself standing alone on a reef north of San Francisco:

I put on my magic robe, black and purple with gold and silver
stars and moons and zodiac signs.
I inhale great draughts of space
I put on my tall pointed sorcerer's hat.
I am larger, better than I thought.
I face the western horizon, the limitless ocean, and bow humbly
to all majesty that is smaller or greater or different than I.

Whitman put an actual portrait of himself across from the title page of the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. His shirt collar open, one hand on his hip and the other in his pocket, he stares a little arrogantly at the reader, the picture of a rugged workingman who defers to no one. It was a mask, we know, for a sensitive, troubled man. But he was at great pains

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to keep that rugged mask in place, and it is an integral part of his poetry. What are we to do with Charles Reich as sorcerer? His autobiography makes clear his almost reflexive movement toward fashionable therapies, youth culture, California sunshine, and even androgyny, but not until this final self-portrait does he betray the faintest interest in the occult. The pointed hat and magic robe appear to be stage effects for a closing sermonette. Its theme is this: "REBEL!" And Reich sums up his revolutionary program in a climactic exhortation:

DOWN WITH THE WALLS
FLEE THE DYING CITY.

Without denying that the life of the mind is in great difficulty, or that our cities may indeed be dying, we must finally dismiss such solipsistic fudge.

Poetry's October Revolution

A HISTORY OF MODERN POETRY. From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode. *By David Perkins. Harvard University Press. $17.50.*

Reviewed by PETER SHAW

Modernism in poetry, as David Perkins describes it, was a short-lived phenomenon that lasted from about 1912 until 1922, the date of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.* It started with Ezra Pound's agitation on behalf of poetic concision, along with his and Amy Lowell's attacks on the lingering Romantic sensibility in English poetry. Although the movement eventually became an "academic orthodoxy," its contribution was complete by 1922. So thoroughly did it change taste in the direction of irony, wit, and the sordid that its impact can be compared only to "the emergence of the poetry of the Renaissance in the sixteenth century, of neoclassic verse toward the end of the seventeenth century, and of Romantic poetry in the early years of the nineteenth century."

Perkins has not attempted to diminish the prestige of modernism, although he admits that his book may appear as part of the contemporary reaction against it. Instead he attempts to offer some new perspectives through an extensive survey, the first of its kind. All the same, Perkins inevitably does have a point of view, of which he seems intermittently aware, and his survey does alter the literary landscape.

In the first place, Perkins erects a partly new canon of modernist poetry by tracing the beginnings of the movement back into the 1890s. In reading excerpts from the neglected poetry of this period one is struck by the disservice that the modernists rendered to poetic taste. By excluding anything that showed the least hint of sentiment, or nature, or beauty—terms that modernists helped to redefine—they narrowed taste to a remarkably small number of poems. The revolution in teaching that followed the poetic revolution presumably brought about closer and more intelligent reading, but it continued to stress only a few poems. As a result of Perkins's rediscoveries, the largely discredited anthology impulse may be given a new respectability. The words "pleasant," "charm," "agreeable," and "enjoyable," currently taken as terms of reproach, may regain the provisional acceptance in the critical vocabulary that they deserve.

Perkins's use of these words, however, becomes part of his implied argument. What he is suggesting goes something like this. Before 1912 a number of poets developed a modern mode. Their achievement differed from the "high modernism" of 1912 to 1922 chiefly in its absence of a well-advertised revolutionary program. Thomas Hardy, Robert Frost, and Edwin Arlington Robinson, along with William Butler Yeats, found a tone of expression that approximated the rhythm of conversation. They eliminated the imprecision and sentimentality of nineteenth-century poetry later objected to by Pound, Eliot, and their followers. Unfortunately, the high modernists obscured this achievement by characterizing all their predecessors as loosely sentimental and old-fashioned. Furthermore, they substituted their version of literary history, which posited a clean break from the past, for the actuality, which was that much of their accomplishment came as a growth from older

PETER SHAW is associate professor of English at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. His book, *The Character of John Adams*, was published last year. He is currently writing a book on the rituals of the American Revolution.

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roots, not a new departure. In reality they represented—like their contemporaries the Bolsheviks, one might say—not a first but a second revolution, which amounted to a kind of coup d'état.

The Aesthetic movement of the 1890s, with its doctrine of *art pour l'art*, its elevation of the artist, and its emphasis on craft, had amounted to a still earlier revolution against the Romantic tradition of the nineteenth century. Afterward "English poetry from 1900 to the First World War was dominated by a massive, many-sided repudiation of the avant-garde of the generation before." High modernism proves to have been the work of Americans, who, lacking an avant-garde in their tradition, could found their own about twenty years after the English did. All this was not clear at the time, as Perkins shows. Instead, modernism at first appeared as a kind of popular avant-garde, as felt in the contemporary settings and rhythms of chanters like Vachel Lindsay and Carl Sandburg, or the quiet prosaicness of Edgar Lee Masters and Robert Frost. As late as the 1930s, modernism as it was taught appeared to lie chiefly in the short, imagist lyric rather than in the symbolic-mythic method of Pound, Eliot, and the later Yeats.

However understood, the high modernist movement was not good for all the poets who adopted it, or at least proved not congenial to them for long. A striking trend that one notices in reading Perkins is a tendency to abandon the new. The rejection of the avant-garde in the early part of the century was followed by a turning against free verse during the 1920s. John Gould Fletcher changed from an imagist and symbolist to a regional poet of his native Arkansas. Edith Sitwell emerged as an enfant terrible of the obscure, then returned in the 1920s to her original affinities for the Romantic, the fanciful, and the "agreeable." And Alfred Kreymborg, an early experimenter and champion of free verse, ended up writing sonnets.

Perkins does not emphasize this failed side of modernism, nor does he mount a defense of the poetry that it displaced. Nevertheless his sympathies are clear. He finds the poets of the old genteel tradition "persons of learning and integrity"; he defends not only the charming and agreeable but what in the case of Wilfred Owen he conceives of as an admi-

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rable Romanticism; he makes a virtue of Walter de la Mare's evocation of "stock response"; and he goes so far as to praise the "wholesome" in Robert Frost. On the other hand, Perkins, try as he may, cannot muster convincing enthusiasm for high modernism. He treats Wallace Stevens as an "affected" writer, weakly credits T. S. Eliot with bringing the modern city into poetry several hundred pages after showing that the city was one of the new subjects of the 1890s, and, after calling Ezra Pound's 1916 volume *Lustra* the poet's first modernist work, concludes that it "makes enjoyable browsing."

Perkins's genteel approach represents academicism in the bad sense. Wishing to avoid the controversial, he treats points of disagreement as questions of taste. And in order to eliminate the troublesome considerations of ideas and ideologies, he limits himself to poets and poetry alone. (Pound's anti-Semitism is never mentioned, nor are Eliot's strange opinions in *After Strange Gods*.) At the same time, Perkins largely omits historical and cultural matters because he believes that the emergence of the modern in poetry was chiefly an internal matter, a reaction against Victorianism. In practice, however, he who attempts to eliminate the historical tangle and the problems of literary judgment plunges himself into the very thickets of ideology he would avoid.

Before noticing how this has been the case with Perkins, I should like to point out that being academic does not necessarily imply being scholarly. On the contrary, the current academic rage to be popular calls for eliminating the devices of scholarship. In apparent conformity with this trend, Perkins has written without footnotes, thereby omitting much useful information. His decision calls to mind rumors that the publishers, Harvard University Press, have lowered their standards in pursuit of profitability, in what amounts to another version of popular academicism. Judging from the editing of this volume, one is tempted to credit the gossip. Beginning with the subtitle, *A History of Modern Poetry* has more than a dozen instances of academic jargon and repetition, all of which should have been corrected by an editor. In addition, there are more than two dozen misspellings, typographical errors, and misusages, including one in the table of contents.

But to return to the other side of Perkins's academicism: his reluctance to take into account the cultural milieu, especially in America. The moderns conceived of their revolution as having to do with the word, a historical circumstance that calls for discussion. William Carlos Williams dedicated himself until the end of his life to a quest for the perfect line of poetry, one that would capture the common idiom of Americans. He shared this obsession with Robert Frost, and to some extent with Pound and Eliot. It is not enough to look at the forces within poetry that led to the new sound of American modernism. As Roy Harvey Pearce, Hyatt H. Waggoner, and others have tried to show, the whole history of the country bears on the lines written by its poets after the turn of the century. This is not to mention the wider influences that led to new forms of expression in Berlin, Rome, Vienna, and, as Perkins himself points out in the case of Marianne Moore, in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Perkins shows how, along with Marianne Moore in 1916, other poets working in isolation "modernized" themselves: Yeats and E. A. Robinson at the turn of the century, Frost and Eliot soon afterward. These independent developments were connected as much by the history of culture as by the history of poetry. Therefore to ignore the historical moment in which they took place is to perpetuate the tendency to regard poetry as separate from life—the very effect of modernism that Perkins deplores.

But there are benefits as well as costs in the limited approach of *A History of Modern Poetry*. In taking a broad view of the years through 1922 (a second volume is scheduled to continue to the present), David Perkins has diminished the exclusive domain of the leading moderns while bringing to light dozens of minor poets and poems that deserve admiration. There are Lizette Woodworth Reese of Baltimore; Robert Bridges, the neglected poet laureate; Walter de la Mare; the war poets, Edward Thomas and Ivor Gurney, along with Wilfred Owen who asked, "Was it for this the clay grew tall?" and Isaac Rosenberg, who asked, "What are the great sceptred dooms / To us, caught / In the wild wave?" And there are Sara Teasdale, Stephen Crane, Robert Graves, and even Maxwell Bodenheim. Finally there is Thomas Hardy.

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If nothing else, Perkins has elevated the stature of Hardy, leaving one to speculate that he may yet come to be regarded as the greatest poet of the age.

Daughters and Lovers

THE LAY OF THE LAND. Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters. *By Annette Kolodny. University of North Carolina Press. $8.95.*

WRITERS IN LOVE. Katherine Mansfield, George Eliot, Colette, and the Men They Lived With. *By Mary Kathleen Benet. Macmillan. $9.95.*

Reviewed by MARTIN GREEN

Neither of these books offers itself as explicitly feminist criticism, but both are studies of literature and sex differences, and both show the influence of the sexually radical mood so strong in the world of ideas today. We are bound to examine them to some degree as representative of the feminist mood and enterprise.

The first thing to say is that they represent quite different wings of the feminist movement. Annette Kolodny belongs to the American Academy, and her book is recognizably a Ph.D. thesis, though a swinging one. The wit of the title—repeated in the first chapter, "Unearthing Herstory"—is a wit in the service of serious radicalism. The argument, however, is conducted in a largely academic style. Many sentences are cast in the same stilted pattern: "But if Freneau could say in 1780 . . . [title of poem] . . . and mean not only . . . [two lines] . . . but . . . [another two], . . . still by 1790 he was ready to ask . . . [another title] . . . and even add . . . [quotation]." That sort of syntactic structure is a set of hanging shelves, hastily nailed up to bring various pots of preserves within the reader's reach. When the next sentence, and the next, are more such shelvings, then the argument becomes rebarbative; instead of being an articulated structure like a house, it becomes an endlessly repeated unit, like a supermarket aisle.

MARTIN GREEN is a professor of English at Tufts University. His most recent book, *Children of the Sun*, was published last year.

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The Lay of the Land belongs to the tradition of Henry Nash Smith (*Virgin Land*) and Leo Marx (*The Machine in the Garden*), although Professor Kolodny develops a feminist gloss on their work. She demonstrates the importance of the metaphor of landscape as woman in American writing. A lot of her argument is therefore verbal analysis, revealing hidden sexual metaphors and meanings. This is a familiar technique, long associated with masculinist critics—and perhaps the association is appropriate as well as historical, for such analysis is always cousin to the sexual snigger. But the author's initial impetus, she tells us, was "distress at what we have done to our continent," and the "we" in question are men. "The masculine appears to have taken power in the New World," and so she is examining the relation of the masculine to the American landscape. She begins with the People's Park propaganda at Berkeley in 1969, and in such language hopes to find clues to the motives underlying our actions—clues to our deepest dreams and fantasies. "Our survival may depend on our ability to escape the verbal patterns that have bound us either to the fear of being engulfed by our physical environment, or to the opposite attitude of aggression and conquest." Whorf and Sapir have shown that such patterns "tend to influence the ways in which we think." (As an intellectual method this strikes me as almost self-caricature. Surely everything "tends to influence the ways in which we think.")

Most of the samples of language, however, come from American poets and writers. Yet isn't the unconscious of America revealed by the American people—or let us say American politicians? Shouldn't we be studying the language of those who actually did "rape the continent," to see if it betrays sexual feelings about the land? The novelists and poets were not the rapists, after all. By and large they identified with the land. From the beginning, it seems to me, the radicalism of the book's intentions is deflected by the techniques adopted.

Professor Kolodny discusses the pattern of pastoralism in the American consciousness (primarily in American literature, of course) brought out by Smith and above all Marx. But she differs from them by insisting first that pastoralism had a sexual character, and then that the American pattern was unlike the European because in America ideas that had been literary fantasy became practical possibilities. The pastoral mood came and went among Americans (she shows it disappearing in Freneau and Crèvecoeur and others), but I agree with her that its coming made a difference. I agree that Marx's treatment of pastoralism assumes too determinedly that these ideas were indulged only as part of a literary game. As a radical, Professor Kolodny needed, of course, to disrupt the "classical" mood, the cycle of eternal recurrence, that Marx's theory implies.

But still there is something conservative in using the pastoral focus. For every time the author reveals the figures of "innocent hope" in her writers, she inevitably suggests the rest of the pattern—the figures of disillusionment and sophistication, and the balance between them; *her* hopes inevitably seem more limited than theirs, her interest in them at best sympathetic. That focus suggests that they were naïve, although their hope is really what a radical should be celebrating. By naming anything pastoral you surely make it either artificial (as Marx does) or foolish.

To take a related point: as Professor Kolodny reveals everywhere the hidden metaphor of landscape as woman, she involuntarily suggests that this is a crude or silly or sinister way to think about it. And yet such language surely *can* mean love, reverence, delight. Unjustifiably, it seems to me, she takes it for granted that the feelings behind the metaphor were not genuine. At the end, indeed, she does say that Norman Mailer's metaphor of America as a beautiful woman in *Armies of the Night* explores and challenges, and could change, our relations with the continent. But through the bulk of the book she implies that to use such a metaphor must mean "fear of engulfment" or "aggression and conquest."

I was and am puzzled by this, and it occurs to me that perhaps the author has responded to a different aspect of the identification of woman and landscape. To see landscape as woman seems to me to allow for a great variety of feelings about it, and every degree of respect. But to see woman as landscape would seem to me overdetermining and demeaning—would imply seeing women as passively submissive, as exploitable, as so many fields for male activity. Is it possible that Annette

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Kolodny is reacting against that idea, and transferring her indignation to the other identification? But this is mere speculation.

Landscape as woman occurs everywhere in American writing, true, but by the same token it means or can mean everything; its mere occurrence means nothing. Several points in the author's argument seem to me too simple. For instance, she makes much of the paradox that the settlers loved their land for being so fertile that it needed no working, and yet they disapproved of those who did not work it. Of course both those two imaginative attractions—to effortless fecundity and to purposeful activity—could be strong enough in an individual or a group to constitute a contradiction, but they need not be. What excited many settlers was the prospect of working to bring this new land from stage one of cultivation to stage two. It was no inconsistency that they were distressed when someone else took it from stage two to stage three of industrial development. That is indeed the story of American development, which does have elements of paradox in it. But it is not paradoxical for an individual to love virgin land and at the same time start to farm it.

Implicitly, this book puts the blame for the modern rape of the continent on the first farm and the first deed of property—and consequently takes no interest in later developments that I would call more significant. It relates property and acquisitiveness directly to war, connecting every act of mechanized killing with the masculine ethos. Crucial distinctions are melted down and obliterated. Typically, the author calls the slaughter of pigeons by cannon fire in Cooper's *Pioneers* "gadget-technology"; she takes no interest in the fact that this gadget is a gun. And apropos of the Virginia miners, who Jefferson said were exhausting the land they worked, she makes nothing of the fact they were mining niter—that is, saltpeter, the crucial ingredient of gunpowder. To my mind, the mining of niter is as powerful and recurrent a symbol as is the farming of land. The saltpeter man skulks across history like the hangman, and however quietly and neutrally he may be alluded to, the critic should expect to find powerful feelings hidden behind the phrasing. A subject like this, where the tone is uneasy because no public rhetoric has been

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consecrated to the thing named, is surely more promising for literary analysis than the well-established language of landscape as woman.

Mary Kathleen Benet's *Writers in Love* is not academic (I gather she is a free-lance writer who lives in England and France), and although it may have lost something thereby, one would guess that on the whole it has gained. What it may have lost is a clear and systematic idea of literary criticism. Her remarks on the writings of her three authors—Katherine Mansfield, George Eliot, Colette—are rather random and inconsequential. Then there is the naïveté of the "in love" in her title, repeated in the book and never disinfected of its soppy connotations. But what nonacademicism is likely to have allowed her is a clear, strong sense of the three women as personalities, which moves from the biographies to the works and back, unself-consciously and fruitfully. She has also, perhaps by the same dispensation, a very flexible mind, so that she can point out all sorts of interesting things about her subjects that do not directly support her thesis.

Another good quality, not to be attributed so confidently to nonacademicism, is the freshness, in the feminist context, of her topic: the idea of looking at women writers who got from their husbands the fostering care and protection that men writers often get from their wives. The author's mind works best in her generous and perceptive characterization of the three men, J. Middleton Murry, George Henry Lewes, and Maurice Goudeket.

A defect is the effective absence of large ideas. Ideas are mentioned—that is, cited: for instance, Erik Erikson's ego-psychology at the beginning and Robert Graves's matriarchal theory of poetry at the end. Large ideas indeed, but these don't direct the intelligence at work in the chapters—which is just as well, considering the use Ms. Benet makes of them. After quoting Graves on the woman writer—"She should be the visible moon; impartial, loving, severe, wise"—she says the lives of her three subjects fall remarkably into this pattern. I find Katherine Mansfield less suited to that characterization than almost anyone I can think of, and even as applied to George Eliot and Colette I don't find it very illuminating. Benet just doesn't use ideas well. She says her book is a polemic as well as a description; its message is that women artists should never renounce "human life" in favor of any political ideal, including feminism. "Human life" is a term as sloppy as "in love," and all I find in this message is that the author doesn't like politics—a fact that half spoils her discussion of Colette. Benet points out that Colette achieved her later literary success partly by identifying herself as "France." Of course, it was a nonpolitical impersonation of France, but that so many readers responded to it (if they hadn't she wouldn't have continued it) is to be explained by political history, by the general French revulsion against the political idea of France. That is a very large fact in understanding the writer, and it is a political fact.

The section on Katherine Mansfield is the most interesting of the three, even though I disagree sharply with the author's judgment of her. Rather I agree with Katherine Mansfield's own remark to her cousin, that she was "tired of my little stories like birds bred in cages." Benet takes her as a genius and as a heroine. Yet—and this is her strength—she describes very vividly the way Katherine Mansfield used and abused both Murry and her devoted friend, L. M.

The author says something that seems to me very suggestive: that Katherine Mansfield's identity as a beautiful young woman was safety for her, and that that "beautiful young woman" was the inspiration as well as the creator of her work. That seems to me exactly right, and it applies to other women writers at similar stages in their careers. For instance, Doris Lessing writes out of just such an identity in the autobiographical novels about her young womanhood. Again and again, such writers show themselves before the mirror, conjuring up the erotic persona that will carry them through the encounters to come that day—even while the bruised and angry mind behind the face resents and repudiates these encounters in advance. This is a gestalt of experience comparatively rare among men and peculiarly close to the artist-self in women. Eros gives them a margin of privilege, for which they pay in disgust and self-disgust.

What I most miss in the book is a typology of women-writers. For instance, Colette's late

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self-characterization as sibyl, country witch, and magic grandmother has something in common with Isak Dinesen's role-playing, and it would be interesting to reflect on that writer-as-old-woman persona. Or on Katherine Mansfield's relation to New Zealand, particularly her rebellion against the empire-builder type celebrated in her family (they called some of their heroes Pa-men, after Pa, the first family member to go to Australia). Both her London life and her Chekhovian stories defied that concept of New Zealand manliness. Or the vaudeville experience of both Katherine Mansfield and Colette—and other writers like Jean Rhys, and not other writers like George Eliot—which derives from, and feeds, the temperament they share and also the stories they write.

The section about George Eliot is less challenging but very satisfying in its treatment of the writer's life, particularly her relationship with Lewes. Benet points out that George Eliot's novels teach humility and self-sacrifice, even while her own experience was a triumph, and in many ways a triumph of egotism, since she was being induced to write by every kind of deference, praise, and protectiveness. The author says some good things about the necessity of egotism to the great artist, although again one could wish they were expanded into a typology.

The Colette section brings out that writer's changing idea of herself at different stages of her career, and the way the literary self changed along with the sexual self. Her father spent his life writing, but when he died his manuscripts were found to be blank paper. Her mother never tried to write, but lived a sensual, poetic life, in intimate correspondence with animals and flowers. Colette grew up professing her mother's faith (rather like Frieda von Richthofen, who had a similar mother), priding herself on not being a writer. Her first husband, the journalist "Willy," managed to have his books written for him, and in fact took the credit for Colette's first novels. So she went through the same experience as her mother, experiencing men as literary frauds and women as creative forces.

Then, after a lesbian and theatrical period, she married Henri de Jouvenel, a journalist-politician, a power in the world of men in France. She bore him a child—at just the age

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at which her mother had borne her—and wrote novels about *grandes cocottes*. This was the period of her wifehood and of her most classical fiction, severely controlled and elegant.

Finally she found happiness with Maurice Goudeket, twenty years younger than herself, a figure in the world of actors and dress designers. Although she had written *Chéri* before she met him, she identified him with Chéri; living with him, she entered her final literary phase, as country wisewoman as well as Parisian sophisticate. Through all these phases, as rogue-dandy, as chronicler of courtesans, as old sibyl, she was always opposed to the world of men and to masculine power in France. Colette became a national symbol for Paris under the Nazis, and *Gigi* was written and received as almost a work of national propaganda, which marked a triumph for her kind of feminism.

What, then, do these books suggest about feminist literary studies? That they need ideas more rigorous than Mary Kathleen Benet's, but more free and flexible than Annette Kolodny's; and that until the writers find such ideas, their studies should be as unschematic as possible—in the hope of accumulating at least the raw material for future ideas.

Butylhydroxianisole, Anyone?

THE TASTE OF AMERICA. *By John L. Hess and Karen Hess. Grossman. $8.95.*

EATING IN AMERICA: A HISTORY. *By Waverley Root and Richard de Rochemont. Morrow. $15.95.*

Reviewed by RUTH GAY

When Mimi Sheraton recently surveyed the chocolate purveyors of New York, she ran into a stone wall when she sampled the fabled Perugina chocolates. Honestly but regretfully she admitted they had a "distinct chemical aftertaste, due no doubt to butylhydroxianisole." Despite its judicious tone elsewhere, the *New York Times* is, in its food pages, a truly crusading journal whose writers lay about them without fear or favor. They can be depended on to reject chocolates for their butylhydroxianisole and to inveigh against the impending imitation cheeses as resembling nothing so much as "kneaded rubber erasers." To confirm the suspicions aroused by these fleeting news stories come two heavily documented books; they report that things are not only worse than before, but also a lot worse than we thought. The new food critics are telling us that the party is over and the wreckage is tremendous. The party, of course, was that enormous spurt in the production of new varieties of food, and new processes in its preservation, that was part of the general mechanization of life in the nineteenth century. Somewhere the inventiveness that spawned roller-ground flour, machine-made bread, processed cheese, and canned and preserved food of all kinds got out of hand.

Paradoxically, the same forces that gave us an abundance of fresh foods are also responsible for the chemical monotony that is now our fate. Both books emphasize how few are the varieties of fish, fruit, and vegetables available to us now compared with those of fifty or one hundred years ago. Although it has become so, merchandising need not be the enemy of variety. Waverley Root and Richard de Rochemont point out in their massive history, *Eating in America*, that the Shakers, who were the first packagers of seed, offered eight kinds of "beans, and the same of peas, six varieties of squash and the same of carrots and beets, and different types of melons, asparagus, cabbage, collards, mustard greens, spinach, turnips, et cetera." It might be argued that these were, after all, only *seeds*. But in that epoch what was true for seeds was also true for varieties of produce, meat products, cheeses, and other comestibles. "The nineteenth century," the authors conclude, "had devoted itself to the increase of variety, the twentieth century reversed the current and set out to restrict it. The only foods which remained on the market were those which would produce the most profit for the least handling." Their lugubrious roll call of vanished species makes our bulging supermarket bins look dull indeed. When was the last time you saw a loganberry?

On that point, John and Karen Hess are

RUTH GAY has published articles in *Commentary*, *Midstream*, *Horizon*, and elsewhere. She has spent time in England and Germany studying the history of diet.

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even more severe. They quote Waverley Root's characterization of factory-made chicken as tasting like a "wrung-out dish mop," and then go on to point out the wastefulness and ecological ruin left in the wake of the Green Revolution. Despite machines and chemical fertilizers, something seems to be wrong when "in 'primitive' cultures 5 to 50 calories were obtained for each calorie of energy invested . . . [while] industrial food systems require 5 to 10 calories of fuel to obtain 1 food calorie."

Root and de Rochemont painstakingly survey, industry by industry, what has happened. The Civil War provided a technological turning point in this country by requiring large quantities of food to be processed and shipped long distances without spoiling. The embryonic meat-packing industry, the sardine canners in Maine, the fruit and vegetable canners in the Midwest, the salmon canners in the Northwest—all gained a new impetus from the war-induced necessity. Condensed milk, which Gail Borden patented in 1856, was propelled into national attention by its use during the Civil War. Soldiers who returned home with a new taste for the canned foods they had eaten in the army created a new and receptive market. With perfect timing, technology moved in to serve this demand with the invention of the machine-produced tin can, the folding cardboard box, and the common flat-bottomed brown paper bag. The cardboard box invited advertising; as Root and de Rochemont point out, even a stenciled name is an advertisement. At the same time, the brown paper bag led to prepackaging and to the transformation of the grocer from a man who knew something about sugar or beans or coffee, to a bookkeeper primarily expert in inventory control.

In the second half of the nineteenth century inventions tumbled over one another, not only in food processing, preserving, and transporting, but also in equipment for the kitchen. Large coal- and wood-burning stoves were replaced by tidy gas models, and ultimately by electric ranges. Water heaters replaced the cumbersome old kettles, while plumbing made sanitation the highest ideal of the American home. Root and de Rochemont deplore this progress because of what it has done to "undermine the practice of the

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cunning crafts of the kitchen," and finally to "reduce us all to the status of robots."

This rather mournful note, which becomes more acerb in later chapters of the Root and de Rochemont book, rises to a high pitch of diatribe in *The Taste of America*. For those who worry about American prose as well as American cuisine, here is one area in which the art of invective is being cultivated. John and Karen Hess are, in Ralph Nader's phrase, blowing the whistle on American diet, American food, and the American palate—all of which they find in a deplorable, if not degenerate, condition. Since I have shared for decades their opinions and prejudices, I found myself punctuating every page with amens, and applauding their heartfelt wish for "good cooking . . . unpoisoned by convenience foods, home economists and gourmet frauds."

In political movements it is said to be a sign of maturity when members fall out and form factions, and so the Hesses do not hesitate to name those who have betrayed their cause. Craig Claiborne and James Beard are only the most prominent of their traitors. The Hess faction is on the warpath against nutritionists, home economists, cookbook writers, gourmet cooking clubs, gourmet magazines. ("Gourmet" is a term of opprobrium in the Hess vocabulary, carrying roughly the weight of "Stalinist" in old Trotskyist circles.) Not far behind are health food stores, restaurants, the Green Revolution, university and government research, the "recipe racket," and, of course, agro-business and the food industry in general. A surprising enemies list, but I am persuaded by the Hesses' characterization of "leaden-palated nutritionists" and their condemnation of the "gourmet" style, which they define bluntly as "anything edible or nearly so that has been fancied up." Each of their enemies is analyzed in long, well-documented, passionately argued chapters. It will be hard to be a complaisant diner after an exposure to the Hesses.

As important a weapon in the food war as bright packages and boxes is the barrage of literature that supports the meretricious products they contain. One is forced to the melancholy conclusion that now, as earlier, the diet of most Americans has been determined more by intellectual or moral considerations than by gastronomic pleasure. Hunched over their breakfast cereals, they have been taught to taste what they read about and to reject the evidence of their own senses.

Root and de Rochemont suggest that religion, with its condemnation of gluttony, was not the only force propelling Americans toward a moral view of food. In a turnabout, doctors invoked theology to promote theories of nutrition and health. After the Civil War, Mother Ellen White, the spiritual head of the Seventh-Day Adventists, promised "God given health and happiness . . . provided you eat two meatless meals a day." Her secular arm was the Western Health Reform Institute, founded in 1866 and placed under the management of W. K. Kellogg, who experimented on his patients with bran, granola, and his own newly invented cornflakes. He seems to have made few cures, but a lot of money.

Our attitude toward virility, no less than morality, has also affected what we find fit to eat. In Texas, according to Root and de Rochemont, "an addiction to explosively spiced food [is] apparently a test of he-manship." It is also the original site of "the virile ordeal of spooning the brains directly out of a barbecued calf's head." The demand for gigantic slabs of meat and the resolute rejection of finesse in seasoning or sauces offer a suggestive field for investigation in the matter of American self-definition.

Eating in America is meant to be a history and is compendious and commodious enough to have a lot of history in it. In many ways, however, the authors always seem most uncomfortable when they are attempting to be historical. Their rather lame first chapter, offering yet another description of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, their resolutely jocular tone through much of the narrative, their genuine helplessness in the face of political events are forgivable in the light of the solid information packed into their book. If they have been humorous and tolerant in their narrative, they are deadly earnest in their conclusion. After they have chronicled good American husbandry and good American cooking, their tempers rise when they describe the present. They wonder whether we will ever have the strength to resist "the flood of glop and slop which flows like slime through the supermarkets." Finishing a description of yet another "food-type

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product," they conclude wearily that "we should all learn to read the fine print."

Here these two teams of writers join hands in the fond belief that if only we would read the ingredients in fine print, we would all recoil in horror and put the gaudy package back on the shelf. But even large print has not reduced cigarette smoking; nor has the flow of three thousand permitted additives into our food reduced American appetites. These books add several hundred more pages to the indictments against our food, but while the problem begins in the factories, the question comes back to that curious laboratory animal, the consumer. Why doesn't he read? Why doesn't he taste? Why doesn't he notice? The profit motive explains a great deal about what is on the shelf, but it doesn't explain the buyer.

John and Karen Hess's impassioned book is an attempt to rouse him out of his trance, to move him from his infatuation with convenience to the pleasure of cooking, and to the profounder pleasure of real food with real taste. The evidence that the Hesses marshal against what we now ingest touches upon many deeply rooted areas of human behavior: snobbery, upward mobility, restlessness, and sheer laziness. It is also the more and more extravagant search for what David Riesman has called marginal differentiation that leads to some of the unbelievable and surely inedible dishes that the Hesses report. They are not content, however, to end with condemnation. They recognize that their demands reach out to our entire economic and social organization. Like some other social critics they connect many of our troubles with bigness, and while they reject "cottage crafts," the middle-sized cooperatives they advocate are not an entirely convincing alternative. Yet I admire the spirit in which they admonish us that the search "should be a happy fight, not a sad one. Let us enjoy our food again."

The largest question remains unanswered, and it concerns not only food, but every other area of consumption: dress, housing, entertainment, the decorative arts. We have known for a long time that the good, the "real thing" (natural fabrics, real wood, genuine leather) has been driven out by the bad. But why are the substitutes accepted so joyfully,

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or so supinely, by the consumer? I suspect that the reason has less to do with the things of the real world than with a state of mind. When we have understood this particularly modern form of nonrational behavior, we will understand a great deal more about ourselves. What we have, then, is not a case for the Food and Drug Administration, but one for the psychoanalyst's couch.

Sonnets in the Out Box

SOUVENIRS AND PROPHECIES: THE YOUNG WALLACE STEVENS. *By Holly Stevens. Knopf. $12.50.*

Reviewed by JAMES ATLAS

Mallarmé and Valéry were in search of "clear enigmas," Wallace Stevens observed in a preface to Valéry's *Eupalinos*; it was a characteristic oxymoron for the poet–insurance executive from Hartford, who lived more in the quotidian and wrote less about it than any other American poet. Because our poets have tended to embrace the Savage God with such dutiful fervor, Stevens's pursuit of a normal career has become a sort of legend, and his fanciful, outlandish imagination seems all the more strange for having emanated from such an apparently ordinary life. "Poetry is not personal," went one of the *Adagia* collected in *Opus Posthumous*—a declaration reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's famous demand for "the extinction of personality," and contrary to the current obsession with that very thing.

The publication of Stevens's letters just over a decade ago afforded the first glimpse of the private man through excerpts from his early journals, and now his daughter has further amplified that portrait in *Souvenirs and Prophecies*. A good part of the new book reproduces journals well represented in the earlier volume, but no matter. Their purpose here is to provide a fluent narrative, and Holly Stevens has succeeded admirably in establishing connections where Stevens—or, more probably, his wife—suppressed passages thought to be too revealing. A great deal is revealed all the same, for these journals have none of the self-consciousness of autobiography, and were intended only to monitor the peculiar, introspective existence Stevens led for so many years. "I should be content to dream along to the end of my life," he noted in 1900, when he was twenty-one. Given the curious habits of lassitude and desultory reflection chronicled here, it is a miracle that he ever awoke from that oneiric state to produce the magnificent poems of his maturity.

Stevens came to his vocation early, filling the *Harvard Advocate* with his own poems under a variety of pseudonyms. But these conventional, stunted effusions showed little promise, and are far less illuminating than his journals, which cultivated "a philosophical, Paterian vein" (in the words of his daughter) still evident half a century later in his lectures and essays. "I believe in the efficacy and necessity of fact meeting fact—with a background of the ideal"; "I'm completely satisfied that behind every physical fact there is a divine force": these convictions prefigure his later description of poetry as "the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality" or, as he put it in one of the luminous, incantatory essays collected in *The Necessary Angel*:

> It is a transcendence achieved by means of the minor effects of figurations and the major effects of the poet's sense of the world and of the motive music of his poems and it is the imaginative dynamism of all these analogies together.

Still, such foreshadowings are tenuous; the undergraduate Stevens is curiously opaque. Loitering in his attic room on Garden Street, dining with Santayana, reading in a haphazard fashion, he rebuked himself for being a "mental aristocrat" and ignored the hortatory letters from his father urging him to become "a real live boy who means to crowd the men on the front bench in whatever place he goes." Eventually Stevens left Harvard without a degree, after an episode in which he entered a Harvard Square restaurant late one night "fairly lit"—in Witter Bynner's account, which alone is worth the price of this book—and vaulted over the counter, "an-

JAMES ATLAS has published essays and reviews in the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New Republic*, *Commentary*, the *Village Voice*, and *London Magazine*. His biography of Delmore Schwartz will be published in the fall.

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nouncing jovially that he was going to rape" one of the waitresses. The robust poet then crashed to the floor, dragging his prey down with him; thereupon a member of the Harvard English department intervened. When a "deplorable report" of this incident reached the dean, Stevens was expelled.

In the years that followed, he lived in utter solitude in New York, working as a journalist for a time—his most interesting assignment was to cover the funeral of Stephen Crane—before he entered law school. "I'm in the Black Hole again, without knowing any of my neighbors," he wrote in his journal. "The very animal in me cries out for a lair. I want to see somebody, hear somebody speak to me, look at somebody, speak to somebody in turn." Wandering the streets alone, he studied the city's chaotic life with a Dreiserian exactitude. The portrait of New York at the turn of the century that emerges from his journals has a visual, specific quality surprising in a poet who came to believe that "life is not people and scene but thought and feeling." Here is a single example:

> West street, along the North River, is the most interesting street in the whole city to me. I like to walk up and down and see the stevedores and longshoremen lounging about in the sun. They are always dressed in overalls and a blouse, with a cap on their heads, a pipe in their mouths & their hands in their pockets. They are either fine big-boned, husky fellows, or wretched decrepit wrecks. Then there is such a tremendous amount of business done in West street by the Jew with a few combs or cuff-buttons of cat's-eyes from Mexico to sell, through the hucksters, & fishermen and grizzly oyster-openers, & ferry-keepers up to the men who run the steamship lines. The street is as cosmopolitan and republican as any in the world. It is the only one that leaves the memory full of pictures, of color and movement. Clattering trucks and drays, tinkling and bouncing horsecars, hundreds of flags at mast-heads, glimpses of the water between piers, ticket-brokers & restaurant piled on restaurant.

Stevens eventually learned to dread "the people," and his poetry is filled with ominous forebodings of the triumph of "mobs" and "medium men," "Polacks that pass in their motor cars," and "a slime of men in crowds"—images from his late poems that complement a hatred of Communism, that "grubby doctrine" assailed in "Owl's Clover," where:

"It Would Be A Great Pity...

if you put this book down without at least reading the first chapter. Once you have done that you will probably be compelled to read the volume through to its bitter, bitter end."
—**Judith Acton,** *from her Introduction to*

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> Basilewsky in the band-stand played
> "Concerto for Airplane and Pianoforte,"
> The newest Soviet reclame.

But experience no longer available to the vice-president of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, the decorous correspondent of the *Letters*, was a source of pleasure to the younger man afflicted with an excess of sensibility: "the tormenting harmonies sweep around my hat, my bosom swells with 'agonies and exultations'—and I pose."

There is no trace of "pose" in the assiduous records he made of his walks in the countryside. Touring about New Jersey on foot during the weekends, Stevens covered impressive distances of up to forty miles, noting with a receptive eye the landscapes that invigorated his penchant for self-reflection. "New York is a field of tireless and antagonistic interests," he complained, "undoubtedly fascinating but terribly unreal." In contrast, the proliferating splendor of the natural world affected him profoundly, and when he returned to New York after one of these excursions, it was only to find his urban existence all the more oppressive:

> Oh, Mon Dieu, how my spirits sink when I am *alone here in my room! Tired of everything that is* old, too poor to pay for what's new—tired of reading, tired of tobacco, tired of walking about town; and longing only to have friends with me, or to be somewhere with them: nauseated by this terrible imprisonment.

There was no immediate hope of escape, for years of law school and a dreary practice lay before him. "Indefatigable in procrastination," Stevens wrote a few poems, and wondered if he was only "a New Jersey Epicurean." But a vague *fin-de-siècle* longing flourished in his mind, supplemented by an even more vague ambition: "I should live with Mary Stuart, Marie Antoinette, George Sand, Carlyle, Sappho, Lincoln, Plato, Hawthorne, Goethe and the like. I am too languid even to name them." He was the prototype of the *flâneur*, exercising a fastidious imagination while remaining scrupulously apart from it; and this attitude was to define his poetry when he finally came to write it. In his youth—and a prolonged youth it was, lasting until well into his thirties—Stevens could only meditate upon its nature.

By 1907, his correspondence was being usurped by endless letters to Elsie Kachel, who became his wife after a protracted courtship. But Stevens now had an occasion for his poems, and in 1908 presented her with an undistinguished "Book of Verses." He was by this time verging on thirty, and still capable of such lines as these: "The wearied mammoth reared / His reddened tusk"; "Drone, dove, that rounded woe again"; and so on. But the following stark entry could serve as a paradigm of his anomalous life: "Engaged at the office all day on a sonnet—surreptitiously." It was Stevens's conviction that poetry was innate, a "sense" or "mechanism" that operated like any other faculty; or, as he observed in "Effects of Analogy": "A man's sense of the world is born with him and persists, and penetrates the ameliorations of education and experience of life." If a single motif can be isolated from these early journals, it is a pervasive intuition that his vocation had been obscurely determined but had yet to be revealed. Like Valéry, he chose to linger in the realm of "what has yet to happen."

Much has been made of Eliot's apprenticeship to the French symbolists by way of Arthur Symons, but it was Stevens who transposed their obsession with pure sensibility to an American idiom. "French and English constitute a single language," he once remarked, and his journals chronicle an extensive reading in French literature and philosophy, including such esoteric figures as René Françoise Armand Sully-Prudhomme, Ninon de Lenclos, and Emile Verhaeren. But he had yet to discover the particular temperament that informs his poetry. For all his claims about the requirements of impersonality, Stevens knew, as he admitted in a late essay, that "there can be no poetry without the personality of the poet." It is this personality that is largely absent from the journals. So few critics have emphasized the comic element in his poetry, the gay witticisms that flourish on virtually every page of the *Collected Poems*. His eccentric vocabulary, his casual asides: "Good-bye, / Mrs. Pappadopoulos, and thanks," "Well, nuncle, this plainly won't do"—his jocular self-parody: "I sang a canto in a canton," "Sepulchral señors, bibbling pale mescal"—the bizarre titles: "Anecdote of the Abnormal," "Saturday Night at the

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Chiropodist's": essential to the grand design of Stevens's poetry is this confident but faintly self-deprecating sense of play, as if language were a provisional, approximative medium capable only of aspiring to the nature of reality. Randall Jarrell considered this manner "baroque and rococo," but Stevens's artifice represents a discourse on the poetic imagination, one that postulates poetry as a gloss on itself, "a satisfying of the desire for resemblance"—not to the world, but to the mind's activity.

In *Souvenirs and Prophecies*, we leave Stevens in 1914, just beginning to publish the poems that will establish his reputation. "I cannot explain the great leap from the juvenile verses to 'Sunday Morning,' " Holly Stevens concludes, "but we have seen many intimations of its coming." In truth, the journals intimate less than she supposes; there can have been few other poets whose genius unfolded at a more leisurely pace. But they do disclose occasional premonitions of what was to come, elusive glimpses of a gathering imaginative force that recall Stevens's wry definition of poetry as "a pheasant disappearing in the brush."

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The Celebrated Buffoon

THE NEW MENCKEN LETTERS. *Edited by Carl Bode. Dial. $19.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM HALEY

Associative memory creates its own clichés. The nature of clichés being generality, they can be unfair. Too often when I think of Henry Mencken there comes into my mind that splendid opening paragraph of Shaw's preface to *Back to Methuselah*—possibly the most beautifully architected sentence that master of lucid prose ever achieved—ending with "Have you the works of the celebrated Buffoon?"

Mencken, as this volume of his letters shows, could care deeply about some things. When he was concerned with the principles and practice of writing, he was continuously serious. His work on *The American Language* was scholarly and indefatigable. Music moved him. His loyalties were impressive. His hatred of Comstockery was intense. If he seemed mocking when he tried to cope with religion, it was because he saw it as "an effort by ignorance to account for a mystery that knowledge simply puts aside as intrinsically impenetrable." He cared about many things. Yet buffoonery would keep breaking in.

Often it was no more than high spirits, mental and verbal horseplay. It was not the whole man. He could be sensitive as well as tough. One sometimes suspected a Chestertonian paradox—high spirits artificially induced to keep an inherent lowness at bay. Beer and brothels were staple ingredients of fun.

Last Sunday we had a night you would have enjoyed—a lewd mock trial. Charge: Seduction under promise of marriage. Accused: H.L.M. Plaintiff: Sam Hamburger. Judge: McDannald. (His written decision was a scream.) Court pornographer: Hildebrandt. Old Tinker, with the whiskers, appeared as Madam X, a famous Philadelphia bawd. Defense: that the judge had himself ravished the plaintiff. Evidence: his thumb-print on

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SIR WILLIAM HALEY was a director of the *Manchester Guardian* and *Evening News* Company from 1930 to 1943; during those years both papers had personal links with the *Baltimore Sun*.

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her ham. Exhibit: a thumb-print enlarged to 6 by 10 feet.

Such notes, held too long, can become shrill and boring.

Mencken never came to satisfactory terms with religion, one way or the other.

You always assume that, because Christianity seems to me to be piffle, I believe some contrary *theory—that, because I laugh at Christian Science*, I therefore swallow all the childish hocus-pocus of incompetent family doctors practising up side streets. This is absurd. My skepticism is more thorough-going than you imagine. I doubt everything, including even my own doubts.

He saw himself akin to Swift, who wrote, "the chief end I propose to myself in all my labours is to vex the world rather than divert it." It was possibly these combined reasons that caused Mencken to intrude religious gibes unnecessarily.

Conrad himself is now here. . . . At last accounts, he was laid up at Doubleday's house with rheumatism. I have instructed my chaplain to pray for him.

Twenty years later, on my first day in charge of the BBC, there was, on top of a pile of goodwill messages on my desk, a cable saying, as far as memory can accurately quote, "God help you. Have ordered a thousand masses for the salvation of your soul—Henry Mencken." What impression it made on my office I do not know. I sensed disapproval. All was put right by a second cable a few days later: "Masses totally ineffective. Have shipped a hundred tons of headache powder instead."

Professor Bode, who has done an excellent job of giving the background of each of the recipients of these 550 or more letters, and explaining the circumstances that caused the letters to be written, says Mencken shielded his privacy with "his 'comic mask' as Edmund Wilson put it, but he does it so deftly, with a quip or a smile, that the shielding is easy to overlook." This is difficult to judge. Could not Mencken have been as much astray in private matters as he was all too often in public affairs?

At this distance of time, too much should not be made of Mencken's political gaffes. The quadrennial nominating conventions were high spots for him. He was interested more in the pantomime than in the principles. His judgments were slapdash. He did not pretend to be a shrewd political prophet. (But he did see, twenty years before most people, that "all schemes of monetary reform collide inevitably with the nature of man in the mass.") Nor should his pro-Germanism, even for a time after the Hitler takeover, be held against him. His lifelong sympathies were German. Anti-Semitism can be found in his obiter dicta. Yet as early as May 1933 he saw no way to make the defense of Germany convincing to fair men "so long as the chief officer of the German state continues to make speeches worthy of an imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan." In 1936 he wrote to a Frankfurt correspondent: "I am entirely out of sympathy with the method used by Hitler to handle the Jewish question. It seems to me that the gross brutality to harmless individuals must needs revolt every decent man." These things should be remembered before at least one myth about Mencken takes hold irrevocably. When, in 1941, he wrote, "My guess is that Hitler's history will follow that of Bonaparte—that is to say, he will be denounced violently as a moral leper while he lives, but after his death judgment will be revised and he will come to be a sort of hero . . ." Mencken knew nothing of Auschwitz, Belsen, and Buchenwald. Wiser and more politically experienced men than Mencken could ever hope to be—Lloyd George among them—had moments of blindness about Hitler.

It says much for the strength of Mencken's personality that this side of him should ever have been taken seriously. As great an asset as he was to the Baltimore *Sunpapers*, their publisher, Paul Patterson, viewed Mencken's fireworks most of the time with amused detachment. When during both world wars Mencken's views became obnoxious to the mass readership, he was amicably withdrawn, to emerge when times were less critical.

Of Mencken's two major achievements, *The American Language*, aided by memories of him as a character, could have given him a kind of Johnsonian renown. It was his creation of the *American Mercury* that raised the plaudits and the hackles, and gave substance

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to all the rest. (I was a subscriber from the first number to Mencken's last.) It gave new dimensions to social and literary criticism on both sides of the Atlantic. It started a new tide in American culture. Mencken's success in arranging his arrest and prosecution by selling a copy of the issue of the *American Mercury* that had been suppressed in Boston because it contained the "Hatrack" tale, and his acquittal made it bliss to be young. His championing of Dreiser, in spite of his critical reservations, increased my generation's cheers. Admittedly the cheers were discontinuous. Wrongheadedness was tolerable; intolerance was not. Maybe this was merely the vexing process at work. Or was it the man himself?

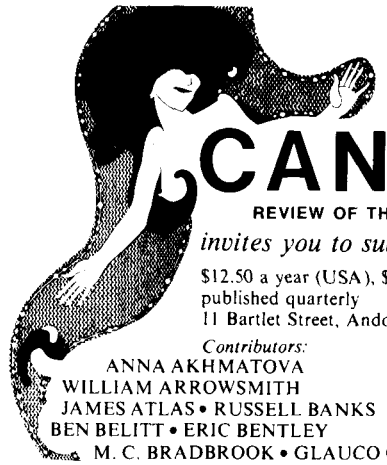
These letters give part of the answer; a complete one is impossible. They confirm what could never have been seriously doubted: that in a good deal of his crusading Mencken was passionately sincere. Writing to a collaborator of thirty years earlier, he said in 1944:

> Perhaps curiously I am really an optimist—that is to say I believe in human progress—in the long run. But there are a great many periods of recession and I suspect we are in one of them now. Before there can be any real movement forward we'll have to get rid of the baloney that now chokes and suffocates humanity.

That baloney included fundamentalism, mental and verbal bombast, intellectual dishonesty, modesty that he considered bogus, and, as he listed them to Joseph Hergesheimer in 1944, "the imbecilities of religion, the failure of democracy, the fraud and futility of war, and so on." He saw these as "the general movement of the world." He thought it to be "the duty of every man who can reflect and write to record his judgment on such things." He fought doughtily, if not always fairly. And when he wrote to some young author, or described to an inquirer his methods of work, he was simple and practical.

A strong strand of practicality runs through these letters. Mencken was a man busy in the world, with little time for ivory-tower abstractions. Active in his own profession, he stimulated, criticized, helped, and guided others. His rejections of would-be contributors show a kindly side of his character. His letters were, with very few exceptions, germane to some matter in hand. If Professor Bode's estimate that Mencken wrote, typed, or dictated about a hundred thousand letters is reasonable, then we cannot expect distinction. Mencken was not a Voltaire or a Horace Walpole, a Chesterfield or a Madame de Sévigné. In his correspondence it was not his purpose to be a stylist. If he had any coherent philosophy that held together his optimism and his pessimism, his belief and his unbelief, his partialities and his prejudices, it never got into envelopes. Intimacy also seemed beyond him. His letters to Marion Bloom, whom he thought of marrying, and to Sara Haardt, whom he did marry, were, judging by those in this collection, passionless.

Yet when I was in New York in 1971 I felt impelled to visit the public library where—the fifteen-year closed period after his death having elapsed—originals of Mencken's letters were being exhibited. It was good to have memories awakened of this vigorous, mentally bustling man, with so many generous instincts. Whether one likes Mencken much or little, he was a force and a portent. Professor Bode's volume sets him luminously in his time.



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The Reader Replies

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—Editor

A Literature Against the Future

I must agree with James Stupple's suggestion that much of the current academic interest in science fiction is attributable more to the need to produce publications than to a desire to learn. However, I think a deeper problem exists in the academic approach to SF: the professors studying SF are members of C. P. Snow's first culture—that of the humanities minus science—trying to read a literature written to a great extent by and for members of the second culture—that of science and technology.

Considering that mainstream fiction is a literature of the first culture, and either ignores science and technology or treats them with blind mistrust, it is not surprising that many scientifically oriented people turn to SF as an alternative. If you live in a world where the scientific method and its products are a dominant part of the intellectual environment, you will seek out fiction which creates myths relevant to that world.

But that world is a mystery to the critics from the first culture. Mr. Stupple's article repeats many common misconceptions about SF; I will discuss one here to illustrate my point.

The article asserts that the Viking mission to Mars "... has undoubtedly done SF permanent harm. ..." That, to put it bluntly, is a ridiculous statement. It is almost as ridiculous as the question asked of several SF writers at the time of Apollo 11: "Now that they've landed on the moon, what's left for you to write about?" Viking, like Apollo, like the laser, like atomic power, is only one of many scientific and technological developments that turned out different from the SF stories that preceded it. No one who understands either science or SF expects that it will be the last, for the continual revolution in our picture of the universe is a normal part of the scientific and science fictional world view. In fact, most SF writers and readers would have been disappointed if Viking hadn't revolutionized our understanding of Mars; that, after all, is the purpose of basic research. Mr. Stupple's belief that Viking represents a damaging, disordering influence on SF betrays a profound misunderstanding of the genre and its relationship with science.

The inability of the critics to deal with SF in any terms but those of their own culture is reflected in the tendency to overemphasize those writers who are closest to the mainstream. Thus, only one author is discussed at length in Mr. Stupple's article, and he is Kurt Vonnegut. Vonnegut himself does not like to be called an SF author, and his philosophy is much closer to that of the mainstream than to most SF. Also, those SF writers who are most popular among scientifically oriented people, such as Larry Niven, are dismissed as writers of escape fiction (of "trekky thrillers," as the article puts it). It never occurs to the critics that perhaps the reason they cannot find a message in this type of SF is because they are looking for the wrong kind of message.

Robert Hawkins
Denver, Colorado

When James Stupple chooses to debunk the entire field of SF (Spring 1977) by means of illustrations drawn from the writings of Kurt Vonnegut, the exercise is not unlike debunking modern poetry via the syrupy verse of the greeting card industry or debunking Victorian literature via the writings of Henry Spencer Ashbee. The SF work of Vonnegut is second-rate, at best, and is in no way representative of good SF.

An article which purports to tell us something of science fiction, then mentions Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, and A. E. van Vogt only in passing, then Arthur C. Clarke and Brian Aldiss (to name but a few) not at all, is a trifle suspect.

Perhaps Mr. Stupple's error lies primarily in what he believes science fiction to be. From his article it would appear that he wants SF to present him with an errorless blueprint of the future, firmly grounded in unassailable and complete knowledge of all facets of the past and present. Sorry, but that is not (and never has been) the purpose of these stories. They are not supposed to be prophetic writings. True, some of the writers have rather startling records as science prophets (for example, Arthur C. Clarke's description of communication satellites written in 1948) but that is not the purpose of the genre, merely an occasional and intriguing side effect.

So, too, should we not be misled by the "space operas" and "science fantasies." They are not in and of themselves SF, but a subdivision of the field.

Good science fiction takes a known, a supposed,

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or a quite possible sceintific idea, phenomenon, or piece of hardware, and a known, supposed, or quite possible human condition, then—via the author's imagination—extrapolates into a different time/space. The author carries things to their logical (or illogical, depending on his bent) conclusion or extreme. In the hands of a good writer the result is an interesting story, based on ideas—one which will teach you something about science.

JUDITH G. HELLER
Lincoln, Nebraska

MR. STUPPLE replies: In response to Ms. Heller and Mr. Hawkins, I can only repeat my contention that contemporary Anglo-American science fiction treats science in a most frivolous, offhand fashion. Mr. Hawkins cites Larry Niven as a *pure* SF writer (unlike somebody such as Vonnegut, who has been muddied by the more sluggish "mainstream"), who supposedly deals with science in a serious, knowledgeable manner. (It is interesting to note here that, whereas its fans used to complain that SF was judged only by its worst examples, they now seem to complain when it is judged by the best.) But if one takes the time to look closely at Niven's works, one will discover that like most writers of SF he really does not have much to say about science and technology, but instead merely tinkers and toys with them, turning them into props for his adventure stories. *Ringworld*, the best known of his novels, is typical. It begins with a fairly interesting idea about a ring-shaped world located deep in space. But as soon as explorers from Earth arrive (using "quantum II hyperdrive") and begin poking about, Niven drops whatever interest he might have held in physics and astronomy in favor of silly science fictional romance. At this point the novel degenerates into the lowest and most common kind of adolescent adventure yarn in which the good guys (including some fuzzy orange catlike creatures and something else resembling a two-headed camel) rush about Ringworld much as Flash Gordon used to rush about Planet Mongo, stopping every now and then to speculate about the condition of Teela, the novel's female lead (all women in SF have names ending in *a*) and to engage in the *de rigueur* futuristic fencing matches with the native hordes. In other words, *Ringworld* is vintage space opera; and any "science" that might be found in it is purely incidental.

Freedom of Expression: Too Much of a Good Thing?

In arguing for censorship of obscenity, John Sparrow (Spring 1977) advocates banning the worst specimens lest one of them may someday injure an innocent citizen by leaping on him from ambush. He is not seeking to protect us from ourselves—let us thank him for that—but from each other, or rather from lurking obscenities. He considers these creatures so dangerous that no zoo can contain them; they must be eradicated.

Loud music late at night can be traumatic, yet we do not ban music; we restrict its time, place, and volume. Drunken drivers are a menace, yet we do not (any more) ban liquor; we forbid drunken driving. Perhaps someday we can learn to be similarily precise and selective in our control of marijuana, heroin, and obscenity, letting adults have free choice about using these products, and making laws only to reduce to an acceptable level the risk of harm to others. Accompanying such precision must be a general recognition that citizens in a free society run a daily risk of shock and outrage, that this risk is part of the price paid by all for the freedom of all.

I suggest, as a basis of all discussions of social policies, a strong presumption in favor of free choice by individual adults—like the presumption of innocence in criminal trials—whereby the burden of proof lies on him who would restrict individual freedom. Such a presumption would, I think, undermine much of Big Brother's authority, to the benefit of all of us.

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Observing the Sabbath

For the past several years, I have enjoyed Aristides' monthly essays very much—I think particularly (as a librarian) of the one on the difficulties of weeding one's private library ("The Opinionated Librarian," Winter 1975/76). Most of us in the field of librarianship believe that as much instruction ought to be given (except that no one knows how to do it) in the art of weeding as in the art of reading. But this is what one of Christopher Morley's daughters once called, in writing to a business firm she thought had cheated her, a "letter of askance," having to do with Aristides' Sabbath essay in the Spring 1977 issue. (It is also, I suppose, an exercise in nit-picking.)

1. ". . . Sunday dinner, another Sunday institution that appears to have gone by the *boards*. . . ." For more than twenty years now, I've been crusading to get the final *s* out (so also with the phrase "one for the books," where the *s* is wrong). The "board" is the side of a ship (boat) and what is jettisoned goes by it. But I think it's a lost cause.

2. I don't doubt that a schlock midwestern clothing store would advertise that "Sunday is fun day," but the line has a much more honorable ancestry in a song of the 1890s, "On a Sunday afternoon," which ends: "They work hard on Monday / But one day that's fun day / Is Sunday afternoon."

Nit-picking aside, I enjoyed the essay very much; what Aristides says about the quality of sermons today is very true. In my own local Benedictine abbey, the young 'uns are likely to take their texts from Herman Hesse or the autobiography of Liv Ullmann or the TM works of Maharishi Mahesh. And I know it is possible that in "boards" Aristides was traduced by an editor or a compositor.

(Rev.) D. Bernard Theall, OSB
Associate Professor of Library Science
Catholic University
Washington, D. C.

State of the Lingo

I herewith volunteer for membership in Aristides' national posse of cranks. His "thirteen different words beginning with the suffix 'cryo'" (Winter 1976/77) is a kind of drollery we have come to expect in the first edition of the *New York Times*, but in a *Scholarly* discussion of English usage it does seem glum.

A writer's deadliest enemy may be the editor who trusts him so thoroughly that he doesn't read the poor devil's copy.

William A. Caldwell
Edgartown, Massachusetts

Aristides replies: William Caldwell's letter is not the only one I have received from attentive readers about this howler. Despite the proofreading of the author and four editors, it nevertheless crept through. All I can say is that I am embraced by shame, am coming out with my hands up, and am prepared to take a polygraph examination to prove that, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the editors of The American Scholar and I *know the difference between a prefix and a suffix.*

* * *

"Massive simplicity," Harold Laski. "Massive dignity," Ellen Glasgow. "Massive volume," *Times Literary Supplement*. I was doing rather well, I thought, with Webster's *Third* until I came upon *Newsweek*'s "the most massive dramatist of his time."

I shall try to make it up to you.

Daniel P. Moynihan
United States Senate

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